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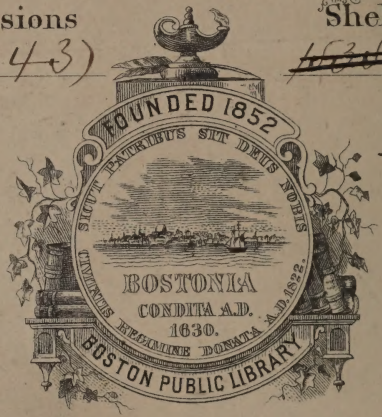

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SAINT THERESA

OF AVILA.

BY

MRS. BRADLEY GILMAN.

J

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PREFACE.

"Was Saint Theresa a real character? I always associated her with Saint Margaret and the Dragon," remarked an intelligent friend of the writer soon after this little book was begun. To the student of Christian history or of Spanish literature, Saint Theresa has an honored place; but to the general reader she is no more real than the enchanted princess of the fairy-tale, or the Lorelei of the Rhine. To make her a living, breathing human being, with feelings and foibles like our own, has been the most delicate part of the writer's task.

For more than three hundred years well-meaning biographers have endeavored to laud the memory of Theresa; but their efforts have resulted in relegating her to the realm of romance, and substituting for the crown of laurels she so richly deserves that which less becomes her, — the spectral halo of the saint. To de-

scribe the woman Theresa, with all her strength and tenderness, her courage and humility, without withdrawing her wholly from the prismatic atmosphere of religious fancy in which she was born and bred, has been the writer's earnest purpose. If Theresa, the mediæval saint, illumined and exalted by the fervor of religious zealots, be unreal and fantastic, Theresa the prosaic itinerant prioress is a figure for whom no one can arouse the least enthusiasm. To give to this famous woman the place in history which she so richly deserves, without disengaging from her life the exquisite legends that have twined around it so tenderly for centuries, has been no easy matter.

The facts herein given about Theresa's life are all historic; the many quotations from her letters will indicate this. The multitudinous legends are only the natural outgrowth of the age in which she lived; without them her character would still retain all the essential elements of greatness.

In the letters and memories of Charles Kingsley is to be found the following passage. He had been writing a life of Saint Elizabeth of

Hungary for a present to his wife on their wedding day, and he says: "When it is finished, I have another work of the same kind to begin, — the life of Saint Theresa as a specimen of the dreamy Mystic, in contrast with the working ascetic, Saint Elizabeth, and to contrast the celibate saint with the married one." Now, among the list of Kingsley's published writings this work has not found a place. If such a life had been prepared, the writer of this sketch would have found her pleasant work unnecessary; for surely Charles Kingsley would have treated Saint Theresa's life more rationally than have any of her score of ecclesiastical biographers.

In order to make Theresa's life seem real, the writer has thought best to allow her letters and journals to speak for themselves, and has endeavored to retain in her translations the quaint expressions of the time.

For French translations from the Spanish of these journals and letters the writer wishes to express her obligations to Mr. Martin Brimmer; and for other valuable books of reference thanks are due to the kind courtesy of the librarians

of the Boston Athenæum, the Harvard College Library, and the Worcester Public Library.

In preparing this biography, as Theresa's own autobiography fills many volumes, and as there have been exhaustive lives of her written by members of very many different monastic orders, there has been surely no dearth of material. But the selecting process has been arduous; and it is hoped that in the mass of waste material consigned to the scrap-basket, nothing of importance has been overlooked. Inmates of monasteries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had time to write and time to read much which readers in this busy age of book-making would disdainfully reject.

The story of Theresa's life, told as nearly as is possible in her own words, — this is what our little volume purports to be. If it increase the number of her admirers and make her stand out more clearly as an historic personage, the writer's purpose will be accomplished.

M. R. F. G.

CONCORD, N. H.,
September 7, 1889.

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SAINT THERESA OF AVILA.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

If a chronicler living in the year 1515 had been asked to relate the striking events of that year in Europe, he would doubtless have mentioned early in the list the great victory achieved by Francis I. over the Swiss near Marignano; afterwards, if conversant with the progress of the arts, he might have recorded the completion of Michael Angelo's great statue, Moses; then, if keenly sensitive to the theological tendencies of the times, he might have seen such significance in the Wittenberg lectures as would warrant him in making note of the lecturer, — the stout German monk, Luther, just returned from Rome, filled with indignation against that corrupt city. All these signs of the times he

might have recorded, and perhaps many more. He certainly, however, would have overlooked one event, at that time seemingly insignificant, yet really destined to be productive of far-reaching results to the inhabitants of at least one European country. It is this unheeded event of the year 1515 — the birth of the tiny Spanish infant, Teresa Sanchez Cepeda d'Avila y Ahumada, together with the remarkable life of which it was the beginning — that most concerns us.

No miracles or marvels are recorded as clustering around the little saint's cradle, doubtless because Theresa was the seventh child in order of birth, and as such was greeted with no great enthusiasm by any of her kinsfolk. Her father had been twice married, and her own mother, Beatrix de Ahumada, had spent most of her married life as an invalid confined to her sofa. Contemporary writers tell us that this mother was a frail, sensitive, romantic woman, as much given to novel-reading as are the feeble, fashionable women of our own day. Saint Theresa, born of the delicate, imaginative Beatrix, and

the stern, pious Alfonso, saw the light, then, in Avila, the city of "Saints and stones," on the twenty-eighth day of March, 1515.

It is not difficult for us to picture the saint's native town, for it stands to-day with its round granite towers, its nine gates, and its mediæval fortifications, one of the few impressive monuments which recall vividly the half-civilized, highly-colored life of the sixteenth century. The streets of Avila are still full of curious old houses much like the one in which little Theresa was born. Her father's coat-of-arms — a castle on fire, surmounted by a cross — was sculptured over the door of the house. Above it projected a balcony, then, as now, the favorite resort of pet quails. The principal entrance led into a vast hall, on either side of which were chambers never used except for a birth, a marriage, or a burial. On the opposite side of the hall was a door communicating with the body of the house, and facing it a door leading to a gallery that opened upon a spacious yard in which were the bakehouses and ovens. Beyond this were two great rooms, one being used as the kitchen of

the masters, the other of the servants. The first of these, in which no cooking was done, was used like a dining-hall. In it was an enormous fireplace, occupying the whole face of one wall. In winter, a fire was kept perpetually burning there, in which sometimes whole trees were consumed. On either side of the fireplace low benches covered with wool cushions were placed, and doors led from this hall into the dwelling-rooms, which looked out upon a pretty garden. In such a great mansion, situated upon a fashionable street, Theresa spent her girlhood. As the record reads, she was very much like all girls in all countries. She grew up to be pretty and fascinating, fond of the society of young people, and especially susceptible to admiration and flattery. Many descriptions of her personal appearance exist, written by her contemporaries. One of these, probably describing her as she appeared at the age of fifteen, tells us that "She was of middle stature, elegant, and of fair proportions, plump and perfectly well-formed, possessing a kind of beauty which advancing age did not, as it is

wont, impair; her complexion was bright, the white and red distinct and clear; her hair was black and curly, the forehead broad and smooth; the nose was small, the mouth slightly open, with white and even teeth, short upper lip, the under lip rather full. Her eyes were dark and bright, sparkling and shining. Her hands were small, the fingers slight and tapering; her whole appearance forming a striking combination of dignity and beauty." There is an engraving of her, taken from a portrait painted by Fra Juan de la Miseria, later in life, and now preserved in Avila. Fra Juan was not much of an artist, and on seeing her picture, Theresa is said to have exclaimed, "So, after all, father, you have made me blear-eyed and ugly." Vanity was always one of Theresa's besetting sins.

The children of the sixteenth century found their amusement in listening to the legends of the saints and martyrs, just as the children of the nineteenth century find theirs in listening to the mischievous pranks of Andersen's or Grimm's heroes and heroines; and as modern

children are sometimes detected trying to imitate the doings of their favorite story-book characters, so we are not surprised to find the little Spanish girl inciting her younger brother to run away with her to undergo martyrdom in the country of the Moors.

"I had a brother," wrote Theresa, in describing this childish experience, "about my own age, to whom, though I loved all the others much, I bore especial affection. We delighted in hearing the lives of the saints; and when we saw what tortures they endured for the love of God, it seemed to me that all this was as nothing to give for the enjoyment of Him. . . . My brother and I often discoursed together upon the matter, and at last we agreed that we would go into the country of the Moors, asking alms, that so we might come to be beheaded."

Thus when only seven years of age, these two little mites toddled off to a distant country to die for their religion; but like many other imaginative children, they were brought home in disgrace before they had passed beyond the city walls. They were grievously disappointed

at the failure of their plan, and Theresa, when asked to explain herself, said: "I ran away because I want to see God, and because I must die before I see Him." Another childish enterprise was the construction, in the garden, of a little hermitage, in which Theresa and her brother Roderick expected to live like hermits in the desert, spending their time in fasting and prayer. But this plan, like the other, proved a failure; for the baby hermitage was not "founded upon a rock," and when the rain descended and the wind blew, it fell, and one morning the children arose to find it only a heap of stones.

In the pastimes and plays of children the atmosphere of the times is often clearly manifested. Of all the countries in Europe, Spain had retained the most religious zeal and enthusiasm. The constant presence of the Moors for so many centuries, and the difficulty of subduing the followers of Mahomet, had united the whole Spanish nation in a loyal, almost fanatical devotion to their Church. While in Germany, France, and England the Catholic

Church was being rent by hostile factions, and serious theological difficulties had revealed themselves even before Luther's time, in Spain the necessity of protecting the Church from the invasion of the Moslems had tended to harmonize all differences. A faith which had cost so much blood was surely worth preserving intact; and men, women, and children were eager to sacrifice their lives and their property to keep their cherished faith from a taint of heresy. Martyrdom in that age was sought by many devotees; and a bishop excited the wrath of the people, and was even accused of apostasy, because he blamed those Christians who unnecessarily insulted the prophet Mahomet.

The Church and the Cross, the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, were the most powerful forces in the life of Spain in the sixteenth century. To many, they were far more real than the exciting bull-fights or the brilliant assemblies. The warring of good and evil spirits, the thought of eternity, the "forever and forever" of the exceeding glory or the intense anguish of the world beyond the grave,

were realities impressed on the minds of that sensuous, pleasure-loving Spanish people in a way we can hardly conceive to-day. The feeling which drove so many men and women to seek a cloistered life or a martyr's death in that century was not very exalted, but it was very intense. To them, earthly joys seemed paltry and short-lived beside the never-ending joys they were told awaited them in eternity. In its ultimate analysis, the feeling was selfish and calculating; but the strange thing to understand in our materialistic and sceptical age is the power those unseen, unproven pains and pleasures had over that unspiritual people. The God of the Spanish Catholic, however cruel and anthropomorphic he may have been, was a present God, a real Being to even the children of that day; we find the young Theresa stealing away to tell her beads and recite her various prayers, and at a very early age expressing a wish to be either a saint or a nun. However, just as a boy playing with his toy-boats longs to be a sailor, but forgets his wish as soon as he tires of his game, so Theresa, as

soon as she learned to read, and was introduced into the world of romance and poetry, gave up her early aspirations for the conventual life.

Don Alfonso de Cepeda was a highly educated man, for the age in which he lived, and possessed a library of considerable size. When Theresa was but nine years old her father taught her to read. At that period it was not uncommon for a woman to grow up in a rich and noble Spanish family without even this amount of education. In later years, we find Theresa complaining of four novices from noble families, none of whom could read even their prayer-books. But Don Alfonso was a student, and himself taught his children. His library contained the works of the great Latin authors, of the Church Fathers, much religious poetry, and above all a great many romances. These latter books were forbidden fruit to the children; yet secretly, and without her father's knowledge, the young Spanish maiden managed to read them. Like many a naughty modern girl of thirteen, she stole down to the library at night and returned bearing her treasured story-book,

forgetful of everything, including her obedience to her parents and her religion, in her interest in the prowess and amours of the Spanish cavaliers.

"My mother," she tells us in her narrative of these years, "was particularly fond of reading books of romance, though she did not imbibe so much evil by this entertainment as I did, because it did not hinder her usual work; but it made her omit many duties, that so she might read these books. And perhaps my mother read them that thus her thoughts might not dwell on the great troubles she endured, and her children might so occupy themselves as not to fall into other more dangerous things. My father, however, was so particular on this point, that great care was taken lest he should know anything on this subject. But I continued in the habit of reading these books; and this slight fault of mine, which I perceived in myself, began to cool my good desires, and was the cause of my failing in other things. I fancied, however, there was no harm, though I spent many hours both of the night and day in so vain an exer-

cise, unknown to my father. But I was so much addicted to this habit, that if I could not obtain some new book it seemed to me I could not be happy. I began also to wear fine clothes, and to desire to appear handsome. I took great care of my hands and of my hair, and was fond of perfumes, together with all those vanities I was able to attain, which were many; for I was very curious in this respect."

The result of this novel-reading is easily anticipated. All thoughts of a cloister life vanished, and Theresa's head became completely filled with what we, in our plain-speaking age, should ordinarily term "nonsense." The early death of Dona Beatrix left the care of the whole large family upon Don Alfonso's hands; and for a time Theresa, pretty and fascinating, was left free to amuse herself about as she pleased. Her amusements she found with a host of young cousins who ran in and out of the house, whose flattery and attention did much to spoil the young girl completely. A girl of thirteen is naturally gay and lively, and Theresa was a typical young girl. She was fond of bright

ribbons and pretty gowns, and not a little vain of her pink and white cheeks and soft brown eyes. Spanish etiquette was very strict, and permitted familiar intercourse only between near relatives. But in Theresa's case even cousins did not prove safe companions; for at fourteen we find her a pronounced flirt and coquette, secretly engaged to marry one of these relatives, who was allowed the unrestricted *entrée* of her father's house.

"I had cousins," she writes, "and to them alone was given permission to enter our home. My father was too prudent to admit other visitors, and it would have been better if he had admitted none. I see now how dangerous it is for young people to be allowed so much freedom. My cousins were near my own age. We passed much time together, and they loved me immensely. I let them talk of anything they chose. I was lively, and interested myself in their future plans, in their childish follies, and in everything which concerned them. They told me many things about the life outside my home which it would have been better for me

not to have heard. My eldest sister was much quieter than I was, but I would not follow her example, but preferred to imitate the example of an older cousin who came often to the house, and whose conduct my mother had many times severely blamed. She and I soon became very intimate. We were always together. She confided her secret love-affairs to me, and encouraged me in all my vanities. My father and sister often reproved me for this intimacy, but I would not listen to their advice; and finally, when they found out how far wrong she had led me, my father determined to send me away from home."

By her own statements, Theresa was certainly engaged; but whether her self-chosen *fiancé* was not a suitable one in regard to age, fortune, or character, is not recorded; evidently Don Alfonso was alarmed at his daughter's independence, and thought it wise to remove her at once from these temptations. After some consultation with his eldest daughter, Marie, — about to be married to an excellent nobleman, Don Martin de Guzman, — it was decided to send

Theresa within the enclosure of the Augustine Convent. She was permitted to stay at home through the festivities of her sister's wedding, and on the day following this great event her clothes were packed, and, much against her own will, the young girl was taken away from her pleasant, cheerful home, and given into the charge of the Augustinian nuns.

CHAPTER II.

THERESA WITH THE AUGUSTINIAN NUNS.

THE Augustine Convent, where Don Alfonso sent his daughter, was built in 1508, on the site of an ancient Moslem mosque. It was situated in the centre of Avila, and was a favorite educational establishment for those daughters of noble families who for any reason could not be trained in their own homes. In this place forty nuns divided among themselves the care of the young girls committed to their charge. These good women were known to be strict in their discipline, regular in their instruction, and faithful to all the necessary religious observances. Surely, the gay young Theresa would here be kept from temptation, and would turn her attention towards more serious things.

The faithful tell us that some days before Theresa entered the Augustinian Convent, a starlike light appeared in the midst of the

choir, and, having circled about the religious, was seen to disappear in the bosom of Doña Maria Briceño, the mistress of the pensioners. This is interpreted by the Jesuit historians to mean that a brilliant light was for a time to be intrusted to Doña Maria Briceño's care. This light, however, showed no signs of its brilliancy at first; for there never was a girl who rebelled more openly at the necessary restraints of convent life. Theresa regarded the walls as prison bars. The perpetual silence, the yoke of obedience, the monotony of the days, and even the placid, peaceful faces of the kind sisters seemed to her unendurable. At first she wept from morning to night, and besought her teachers to let her return to her own home. But nothing she could do or say moved them. Her friends from outside — doubtless the particular cousin on whose account she had been sent away — came often to visit her during the first week, and brought her presents. But this could not be allowed by the sisters, and soon ceased at their request. Years later, the saint wrote with pious contempt of those people who "sought

means to trouble my rest with messages and presents;" but we may be sure that at this time in her life she would gladly have had these glimpses of the outer world permitted to continue. The days dragged heavily, and the poor bird beat her wings vainly against the iron bars of her cage, but could not obtain her freedom; then, with the adaptability of youth, she wisely resolved to make the best of her new situation. Soon in the convent, as in the world, she became the centre of an admiring circle. To meet the approval of those around her was an instinct with Theresa, and she ingenuously wrote, "All the nuns were pleased with me, for our Lord gave me the grace to please every one wherever I might be."

The sister who had charge of the young pupils was a woman wise in knowledge of the human heart. She studied Theresa sufficiently to discover that she was not a commonplace girl, and determined to win her confidence and affection. She saw that she was ready to give herself body and soul into the hands of any one whom she loved; and to win this love Doña

Briceño made for the time being her great object. Impulsive and passionate, deprived of her family and friends, Theresa must needs find some outlet for her warm human feelings. Doña Briceño was agreeable in conversation, winning in manner, and gave Theresa all that love and sympathy which her young heart craved. It was therefore not strange that her plan succeeded. "One of the sisters," Theresa wrote, "had especial charge of the pupils. She slept in our dormitory, and was with us constantly. Her conversation was charming. I loved to listen to her." So, little by little, the young girl's heart was won, and as soon as she found some one upon whom to lavish her love she began to be happy. It was in loving that she was always to find peace. The quiet convent days passed quickly, and she no longer wept for her friends outside the walls. She became accustomed to the regular life, grew attached to the inmates, and, above all, was devoted to the gentle preceptress. Doña Briceño, so soon as she had gained the confidence of the young girl, began to try to arouse her religious

nature. She worked upon her morbidly sensitive imagination by telling her of the "reward our Lord gives to those who forsake all things for his sake." Then she gave her an account of her own conversion, and related how she had resolved to quit the world and devote herself to Christ.

"But still," Theresa writes, "I did not wish to be a nun, and hoped that God would not be pleased I should be one, though at the same time I was afraid of marriage."

Here we see the only alternatives open to a woman in the sixteenth century; namely, the cloister or the hearth; moreover, a nun in those days had more independence than a married woman, who was expected to be wholly under the subjection of her husband. There were absolutely no channels open, into which a woman of genius could direct her energy and ambition. The Roman Church taught that wedded life, however pure and noble, was distinctly lower than virginity; and some natures found it easier to vow obedience to God than to an unknown and often unworthy husband.

During the year and a half that Theresa spent with the Augustinian nuns she had time to become thoroughly impregnated with all the fundamental doctrines of the Roman Church. Her religious nature had always been sensitive, and soon succumbed to the gentle influences of the cloister life. Her friendship with Doña Maria banished in some degree her dislike for the convent, but she still resisted the vocation the good sisters tried to urge upon her. The "flesh-pots of Egypt," in the shape of romances, bull-fights, and court assemblies, had not yet lost their power to charm her, and the hair-shirt and scourge she could not make up her mind to endure without complaint. The sensitive young pupil had a physical fear of austerities, and at that time a worldly horror of pious books. But the natural instincts in that age of asceticism had little chance of being allowed to assert themselves, and the pressure brought to bear upon Theresa by the good sisters was almost beyond her power of resistance. As the time drew near for her to leave the convent, the necessity for deciding upon her future life dis-

turbed her greatly. On the one side were all the nuns, who were constantly telling her that the joys of the world were but fleeting pleasures, and that her mind ought to be fastened securely upon heavenly things. On the other side were her natural youthful feelings, leading her to shrink before the prospect of giving up forever the innocent pleasures and beauties of God's earthly world. The child was motherless, and had no friend she could trust. Marriage, now that her first love-affair was ended, — for nothing is heard of her early love again, — seemed like slavery; and it was a slavery without the approval of her conscience, taught as she had been by the nuns to believe that matrimony was not an honorable estate. Thus, between Scylla and Charybdis, slavery and isolation, the poor girl stood; and we do not wonder that her troubled mental state worked upon her nerves, and her nerves upon her body, and that she soon became too ill to make any decision herself. Before her second year at the convent was ended, her father had to be requested to take her home; then began a long period of invalid-

ism for the nervous girl. That her disease was chiefly mental is evident from her last message to Doña Briceño. She begged her teacher and all the sisters "to pray God to call her to the state in life where she could best serve him; and yet," she adds, "I had a horror of being a nun, and a fear of marriage."

Don Alfonso, although distressed at his young daughter's condition, was delighted to welcome her back to his lonely home. He thought that a change of air, with young companions, would soon restore her to health; and he took her with him to make a visit at her married sister's country home, situated some miles from Avila, in the pretty village of Castellanos de la Cañada. Here the beautiful mountain scenery, the country sights and sounds, and above all, the companionship of her sister and her sister's children, soon affected her body and mind. She now grew more cheerful, her old vivacity returned, and soon she was here, as everywhere, the life of the house. "Marie would have liked to have me stay with her always," she wrote, "and her husband also treated me with much

affection." But Don Alfonso, glad to have his daughter with him, was unwilling to give her up, even to her sister, and soon started with her to return home. Avila was some leagues from Castellanos, and the travellers, stopping to break their journey at Hortijosa, visited Don Pedro Sanchez de Cepeda, Theresa's uncle. While there, Don Alfonso was sent for on business, and started away suddenly, leaving Theresa behind him for a fortnight under his brother's care. Don Pedro is described as "a prudent, excellent man, a widower." Since his wife's death he had devoted himself to a holy life, though not having yet left his own home or joined any religious order.

After the gay, happy days which Theresa had spent in her sister's home, she found the old man's house decidedly dull. There were no merry sounds of laughter to be heard, no games were permitted, and life took on a very sombre hue; the situation was almost as depressing as had been her first few days in the Augustinian Convent. Don Pedro allowed no romances to be read in his house, and no

frivolities of any kind to be mentioned. His days were spent in reading pious books, and his conversation was wholly upon the infinite perfections of God, and the fleeting vanities of the world. Some of these pious books the good old man persuaded his niece to read aloud to him; and, as she afterwards confessed, this was not at that time a very congenial occupation. "These books," she writes, "he made me read to him; and though I did not much like them, I appeared as though I did." Poor, vain little Theresa could not be happy unless she pleased those whom she was with. Her loving, lovable nature craved the approbation and approval of others, and was at the mercy of those who surrounded her. At first, then, she "appeared" interested in her uncle's religious reading to please him, and in a very short time the books he put into her hands really touched her tender, impressionable heart.

Don Pedro himself was about this time considering the question of giving up all his worldly possessions and becoming a monk.

Naturally his thoughts and conversation were all directed towards spiritual themes. The books he placed in his niece's hands were the "Confessions of Saint Augustine," the "Letters of Jerome," and the "Morals of Gregory,"—strange reading for a lively Spanish girl of sixteen years. But Theresa was adaptable; and from the first she determined to win her lonely uncle's affection. Day after day she sat in his library, her pretty brown eyes fastened intently on the manuscript lines of the Holy Fathers which he had given her to read. Here she read over and over again that this present life and all it contained was only vanity; and there close to her was a man she respected greatly, who was only too ready to confirm these pessimistic utterances. Don Alfonso had intended to have his daughter remain with her uncle for a short visit only; but his return was delayed, and she lingered there several weeks. What the Augustinian nuns had failed to accomplish, this quiet visit thoroughly effected, and Theresa left her uncle's house, resolved to adopt the convent life forever. It was not contempt of a world which

she had learned from experience to despise that led her to retire from it so early, but a superstitious fear lest she could not endure the perils and temptations she had heard so feelingly described. There were no wise friends to counsel this young girl. She had been left alone for weeks with a gloomy, unhappy man who had outlived his usefulness, whose domestic grief naturally led him to take false views of life. Her constant reading had been from the writings of Jerome, the famous Monk of Bethlehem, whose confessions of rapture and despair have always had a mighty influence over the female heart. According to the Bollandist's record of our saint's life, Theresa read and re-read Jerome's "Letters to Paula Marcella and Eutichium," pondering long over such passages as: —

"O Desert strewn with the flowers of Christ! Solitude, where are to be found the mysterious precious stones out of which the Apostle has built the City of God! Holy retreat where God reveals himself with fulness! Brother, what dost thou find in the world? Believe me, in this solitude I see more light? Here, freed from the weight of the flesh, the soul takes its flight to the skies."

"I resolved," she wrote, "at last to force myself to take up the religious life. I was more influenced by servile fear, I think, than by love. The Devil put before me that I could not endure the austerities of the life because of my delicate nurture." But when these doubts arose, Theresa turned again to Father Jerome's soothing words: —

"What dost thou fear? Poverty? Jesus Christ has called it blessed to be poor. Work? What athlete is crowned without a combat? Art thou hungry? Whoever believes in Christ, God will never permit to hunger or thirst. Fearest thou to lie down naked on the cold ground? Remember that near thee the Lord always sleeps. Is it the solitude which affrights thee? Lift up thy heart unto the heavens, and believe that the sufferings of the present are not worthy to be compared with the glories which await thee hereafter."

Comforting words like these burned themselves into the soul of the susceptible girl. She was dissatisfied; here she was promised satisfaction. She was passionate; here she was promised peace. Above all, she was lonely, she had an immense craving for love and sympathy; and the words of the Monk of Beth-

lehem and of Augustine bade her be assured that there was but one love which would ever satisfy her, and but one way by which she would surely gain inward peace.

She read Augustine's beautiful rhapsody: —

"O love which burnest ever and art never quenched! O my God, which art love itself, set me wholly on fire with thy fire, with the love of thee, with thy sweetness!"

And shall we marvel that it awoke a response in her youthful heart? The earthly love she had heard described in the most fascinating romances of chivalry was as nothing compared to these rapturous joys. "The soul that loveth, goeth up often to the heavenly Jerusalem, and runneth familiarly from street to street, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, wondering at the hosts of martyrs and confessors, gazing at the companies of the virgins," wrote the greatest herald of the Divine love the world has ever known.

Surely, Theresa thought, it was this pure, mysterious love that the human soul was alone created to enjoy; and with Saint Augustine she

cried aloud, that "heaven and earth, and all things that are in them, call upon me without ceasing to love my Lord God."

It was the hope of tasting the deep spiritual joys of Jerome and Augustine which finally led Theresa to leave her own home, to disregard her father's sacred wishes, to give up the tenderest of earthly ties, and to fly like a criminal to bury herself body and soul within the enclosure of the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation; for Don Alfonso refused to give his consent to her leaving the world. She says: "The utmost I could get from him was that I might do as I pleased after his death." But obedience to parents has always in the Roman Church been subordinated to obedience to priests and confessors; and Theresa undoubtedly had the approval of her religious adviser in taking this step. Not satisfied with going away alone from her father's house, and with utterly disregarding that father's feelings, the young girl now turned her attention to persuading her brother Antonio to join her in her flight and become a friar. This she soon

accomplished, and "we agreed," she writes, "to set out one day, very early in the morning, for the monastery where the friend of mine lived for whom I had so great an affection. I remember perfectly well, and it is quite true, that the pain I felt when I left my father's house was so great, that I do not believe the pain of dying will be greater, for it seemed to me as if every bone in my body were wrenched asunder; for *as I had no love of God to destroy my love of father and kindred,* this latter love came upon me with a violence so great that, if our Lord had not been my keeper, my own resolution to go on would have failed me. But he gave me courage to fight against myself, so that I executed my purpose."

Thus we find Theresa setting forth, at early dawn, in company with her brother Antonio, in quest of that most elusive sangreal, — peace.

CHAPTER III.

THERESA TAKES THE VEIL.

A SHORT distance from Avila, in a little valley below the city walls, was situated a large estate which once had been the property of Doña Elvira de Medina. Two years before Theresa's birth this good woman generously offered her patrimony to the Church; and on it was built the monastery of the Incarnation. Owing to the large amount of wealth left to found this institution, it was built to accommodate a great number of nuns; so that at one time two hundred sisters found a home within its walls. It stands to-day with its chapel and clock-tower intact, having been but slightly altered in all these centuries. The stranger is still shown Theresa's cell; and the nuns of to-day still reverently abstain from using the stalls during Mass, because they believe that in Theresa's

time these stalls were always occupied by angels.

When Theresa, in her walks with her father and brothers, saw this monastery, her eyes always lingered on it lovingly. Its high white walls, its luxuriant gardens, its sheltered position, all suggested a peaceful retreat, where the soul could contentedly give itself up to the contemplation of God. Juaño Suarez, an intimate friend of Theresa, had taken the veil in this convent not long before, and this fact undoubtedly had an influence in leading Theresa to choose the Carmelite Convent above all others. At the time she left the Augustinian sisters she wrote: "I resolved if I ever became a nun, not to be in any house except where my best friend, Juaño Suarez, was." The human ties, we see, were not all sundered at this time; and indeed Theresa never succeeded in wholly stifling the crying needs of her heart. She was too human a saint ever to learn to live wholly without earthly love.

The sun had not yet risen, the chimes of the clocks in Avila were ringing a death-knell, and

a solemn requiem Mass sounded in the ears of Theresa, as weary and breathless she entered the Convent of the Incarnation, and declared her intention of remaining there for life. How little did the inmates of this convent dream that this runaway girl was to become a reformer of their order, and to make their convent famous for ages to come! Her entrance into the Incarnation was certainly not conventional, and the prioress felt bound to let Don Alfonso know his daughter's decision at once. Theresa was impatient to begin her new life as soon as possible; that very day she laid aside her fashionable dress and adopted the habit of the sisters, shrouding herself completely in the folds of her white veil, and allowing her beautiful black hair to be sacrificed without a murmur. When Don Alfonso heard of his daughter's flight, he was heart-broken. Again he was bereft of his children and all that made life endurable; but he did not dare to oppose what Theresa felt so strongly to be her vocation, and sadly retired to his lonely house, there in solitude to await his end.

The excitement of the new life, with its new duties, and the prospect of taking her final vows, occupied Theresa's mind through the first months of her novitiate. She was conscientious and faithful in all her duties, and even extravagant in her use of discipline. We find noted that she never wearied of doing little kindnesses for her sister nuns; she would fold up their cloaks, light them to their cells, and nurse them with the utmost devotion when they were ill.

"Everything in religion," she writes, "was a delight to me; and it is true that I used now and then to sweep the house during those hours of the day which I had formerly spent on my amusement or my dress; and calling to mind that I was delivered of such follies, I was filled with a new joy that surprised me, nor could I understand whence it came." But this mysterious joy was not a continual presence with Theresa. Like all other strong feelings, it was only an occasional visitor. When it was gone, the young girl was wretched, and her life seemed unendurable. Then hot tears fell freely and uncontrollably; the nuns accused

her of discontent, and she was very miserable. Her uneven, emotional nature, at one moment exalted and at another cast down, was not easy to live with or to understand; her eager courtesy was misconstrued into officiousness, and her fits of depression into bad temper. She was subjected to a thousand petty persecutions which only women know how to inflict; and she found little more real peace within the convent than she had found in the outer world.

The days of the novitiate came to an end, and Theresa pronounced her final vows. The solemn ceremonial of taking the veil occurred in the presence of a vast assembly from Avila. All the wealth and fashion of the town were there. The convent chapel was crowded with Theresa's friends and relatives. The young girl wore a white veil, a garland of flowers, profusely gemmed, on her head, and a rich white bridal gown. As she entered the church she was met by a procession of priests bearing the elevated cross. When she arrived at the high altar, one of the ecclesiastical dignitaries was presented with a small pair of scissors and a silver

basin. He cut off one lock of the girl's short hair, and the procession then turned back and followed Theresa to the cloister. There the nuns received her, stripped her of her gay apparel, the veil, garland, gloves, and finally her stockings. She was then clad in the dark-brown garb of the Carmelite order, with the white hood and cloak. The abbess took a large pair of scissors, and, gathering her remaining locks into one single handful, cut them all off together; the latter part of the ceremony being performed in profound silence. Theresa pronounced the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, a black cloth was thrown over her, the funeral bell was tolled, she received the communion, a brief sermon was delivered, the abbess kissed her, and the gloomy ceremonies ended; then people went away, the iron gates closed, and Theresa was forever separated from the world by an impassable gulf.

From that time Don Alfonso was inconsolable; and Theresa gave up both her family and her fortune. "I was only twenty years old, and I felt as if I had subdued the world, the flesh, and the devil," she wrote significantly.

Convent life in the sixteenth century was far from being free from the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. It was anything but the peaceful religious life of which Theresa had dreamed. A building which held two hundred women drawn together through a wide variety of motives, social as well as religious, where there was no vow of seclusion, could not be a very quiet retreat. It was against human nature to expect that young girls who had been forced to take the veil should be strict and faithful to their vows. A poor gentleman who could not marry his daughters in his own station sent them into a convent; a superfluous daughter or sister was easily disposed of in this way, and required but a small portion. A woman whose reputation was slightly tarnished, was often unwillingly obliged by her relatives to enter one of these religious institutions for life; and the large convents of every order had become extremely lax in their rules and regulations. Many a pretty nun led the career of a coquette without receiving the slightest admonition from either the abbess or her confessor. In some

convents, plays were frequently performed by the inmates, to which outsiders were freely admitted; in many, the beauty of the nuns brought numerous young noblemen as visitors. After calling on the sisters and flirting with them, these "gilded youth" often sent them presents of flowers and bonbons the next day; and could we have listened to the songs sung by the Spanish nuns of the Incarnation, as they sat in their cells, we should have found them secular songs of the most ardent description. They sang the joys of profane rather than sacred love. Religious duties were performed perfunctorily by most of the sisters, who gave the larger part of their time and thought to talking gossip and planning new amusements.

It was for this hypocritical, irregular, and unsatisfying life that Theresa had left her widowed father and her happy home duties. She had taken the veil despite her doubts, because she truly believed herself called to adopt the religious life, and because she knew herself to be weak in the face of worldly temptations. She had made her vows with earnestness, and

had consecrated her whole life conscientiously to God and his work. Now, to her utter amazement, she found herself almost alone in her high purposes, and surrounded by dangers and pitfalls a thousand times more seductive than any to which she had been exposed in the world. As a novice, she had been shielded from intimacy with the older sisters, and much of her time had been taken up by religious instruction; but as soon as she became one with the rest of the community, she found how different from her innocent dream was the hard reality. In those days every convent had an abbess, who was supposed to overlook the conduct of the nuns; but often the abbesses were young, and utterly unfit for their responsible positions. Many of the nuns, too, bitterly resented any interference; and if they attended to their formal religious duties, they expected to be allowed to come in and go out whenever they pleased. The result was, that a constant stream of visitors, men and women alike, was to be seen coming and going from the convent; and the beautiful gardens which surrounded it gave ample oppor-

tunity for flirtations and friendships between both sexes. In the early centuries of monastic life the cells of the nuns were bare of all ornaments; at this period they had been transformed into dainty boudoirs. Novel-reading, idle chattering, and singing took up the attention of nearly all the inmates, who were really only separated from the outer world by their religious dress.

In Spain, convent life was less openly immoral than in France and Italy; but even in Spain the relations between the priests and the nuns were too intimate to remain always pure. The ideal of convent life had been slowly altering; the institutions remained, but the spirit which had founded and filled them was dead. They had become convenient houses of refuge for unmarried women and widows, permanent boarding-houses, with all the disadvantages such institutions are sure to have. With neither regular occupations nor serious duties to fill their days, the sisters constantly quarrelled with one another; petty jealousies and feuds were fostered; the daily life became trivial, and

never rose to any high religious level. This was a very different life from the one Theresa had imagined; she had found out the wisdom of the saying, "Many seek to fly temptations, and do fall more grievously into them." In shutting out the world, she had only shut herself in with sin.

Disappointed with her chosen vocation, and dissatisfied with her companions, Theresa became restless and unhappy. Her state of mind preyed upon her body, and she rapidly lost strength. Her physical condition was much like the modern one which we call "nervous depression." Fainting-fits were frequent; she spent long days in the infirmary, unable to listen to either reading or conversation; she lost courage about herself, and for a time both friends and relatives imagined she was on the brink of the grave. As the relaxed rules of the Carmelites permitted the nuns to leave the cloister, Don Alfonso suggested that he should again take his daughter to visit her married sister, and try the effect of a change of air.

The superior of the Incarnation directed Juaño Suarez to accompany Theresa on her journey; and in the month of November, 1535, the two nuns set out for Castellanos, with Don Alfonso as an escort. Travelling in those days, in coaches without springs, over rough roads, and through wild and dangerous parts of the country, was far from agreeable. The journey was long and fatiguing for Theresa in her weak state of health; and although they rested several times on the way, she reached her sister's house in what was at first thought to be a dying condition. She rallied after a few days, however, but improved only slowly. At times a trace of her old gayety would return, and Marie with her two children would delight in making her smile occasionally as she had done in the old days. But her smiles were rare, for her sufferings were too intense and continuous to allow her much peace. "For three months," she wrote, "I was suffering most cruel torture."

At Castellanos, they remained nearly a year; but at last, discouraged that his daughter did not improve in health, her father decided to

place Theresa under the care of a famous woman-physician who was at that time living at Bezedas. The journey thither was made by slow stages, Marie her sister, and Juaño her intimate friend, doing their best to make the invalid comfortable on the way. When they arrived, Don Alfonso confided his daughter to the woman whose cures had given her such a reputation, and the whole party hopefully waited for the result of her treatment. But the woman was utterly unable to relieve Theresa's suffering, and by dosing her with violent remedies only made her worse; some medicine given her while there affected her digestion, and for weeks she was obliged to give up eating all solid food. "My pains were unendurable," she wrote, "and I was overwhelmed in most deep sadness, so that I had no rest either night or day."

CHAPTER IV.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL TRIALS.

DURING Theresa's stay in Bezedas an incident occurred which throws light on the peculiar temptations which beset young nuns in the sixteenth century. She tells us that in the place she had gone for her cure "there lived a priest of good understanding and birth, with some learning, but not much. I went to confession to him, for I was always fond of learned men." This priest took "an extreme liking" to the young girl. She says: "There was no harm in the liking he had for me; but it ceased to be good, because it was in excess. . . . Our conferences were many. But at that time, through the knowledge and fear of God which filled my soul, what gave me most pleasure in my conversations with others was to speak of God; and as I was so young, this made him

ashamed. And then out of that great goodwill he bore me he began to tell me of his wretched state." The priest, in fact, made his vile confession to this beautiful young girl. What the state of society and religion must have been to allow this familiar intimacy between a corrupt man and an innocent girl, we cannot conceive. "I was extremely sorry for him," Theresa writes, "because I liked him much. I was then so imprudent and so blind as to think it a virtue to be grateful and loyal to one who liked me. I spoke to him most frequently of God; and this must have done him good, though what touched him most was his great affection for me. He began to consider all that he had done in those years, like a man roused from a deep sleep," and died not long after, "most piously and completely withdrawn from that occasion of sin." It is needless to comment on this misuse of the confessional. Certainly the religious orders had need of being reformed.

Several months were passed by Theresa and her devoted family in Bezedas. Her strength

seemed to fail continuously, and her sufferings increased. "The severity of the pain in my heart, for the cure of which I was there," she writes, "was much more keen; it seemed to me, now and then, as if it had been seized with sharp teeth. So great was the torment, that it was feared it might end in madness. I was in pain from head to feet." Discouraged with the result of this medical treatment, Don Alfonso thought it best to take his daughter home, as he now felt sure, to die. "There was a choking in my throat because I had eaten nothing, and because of my weakness, so that I could not swallow even a drink of water. As to touching me, that was impossible; I was so bruised I could not endure it." The journey to Avila was almost like a funeral march, Theresa being borne upon a sheet. Her fainting-fits grew more protracted, and she once remained so long unconscious that she was given up for dead, and her grave was prepared. When she finally recovered consciousness, and learned her critical condition, she begged to be allowed to return to the Incarnation to die. Still borne upon a

sheet, and pale as death, she was received there by her sister nuns on Palm Sunday, 1537. Her disease was then pronounced to be paralysis, and for two years she was confined to the infirmary, and suffered the most excruciating pain. Her patience under her long illness was touching, and all in the convent learned to love her. It grew to be the custom for the sisters to gather around her sick-bed at evening to tell the news of the day. "I never spoke ill in the slightest degree whatever of any one," wrote Theresa; "for I used to keep most carefully in mind that I ought not to assent to nor to say of another anything I should not like said of myself."

The days passed slowly for the young girl, though she writes, "I was resigned to the will of God, even if he left me in this state forever." This, however, was not to be; and with patience and care, after three years she was restored to her usual health. "O my God," she had sometimes exclaimed during her illness, "I only wished for health that I might serve thee better!" But in spite of the willingness of the spirit, her flesh proved weak. With returning

health came new temptations which often were too strong for Theresa to resist. Friends came frequently to congratulate her upon her recovery, and interviews at the grated window proved more fascinating than the loneliness of the cell. Conversations with so-called "seculars" charmed the girl, and the vivacity of her own brilliant mind attracted to her side a host of her old friends and acquaintances. The very frivolities she had condemned in others she now indulged in herself. "I went," she wrote, "from pastime to pastime, and from vanity to vanity, and from one occasion of sin to another, until I was so distracted by many vanities that I was ashamed to draw near to God in an act of such special friendship as prayer." In this confession we see the sincerity of Theresa's nature. She could not be satisfied with a formal piety. Her inner and her outer life must be consistent, to fulfil her own ideal of right. After her illness, Theresa was held in high esteem by all the inmates of the convent, and as much liberty was given her as was given to the oldest nuns.

"The reason why," she writes, "they thought I was not so wicked, was this; they saw that I liked to have an oratory of my own, furnished with objects of devotion, that I spoke ill of no one, and other things in me which have the appearance of virtue. Yet all the while I was so vain, — I knew how to procure respect for myself for doing those things which in the world are usually regarded with respect. In consequence of this they had great confidence in me. As for conversing in secret or at night, I never thought of such a thing, and I never did anything without leave." Still, as we have seen, the abbess and confessors left a wide margin for the sisters. Theresa's conversations with those outside the convent walls grew more frequent and more engrossing; and she found they did not increase her piety, but did chill her devotional feelings. In vain she tried to persuade her conscience that these interviews were harmless; it was too sensitive to be silenced easily, and she often felt severe pangs of remorse when in the midst of her pleasures. Once while engaged in an agreeable conversation with a new

acquaintance, remorse affected her imagination so strongly that she thought Christ himself appeared before her, grave and stern, leading her to understand that much in her conduct was offensive to him. "I saw him with the eyes of the soul more distinctly than I could have seen him with the eyes of the body, and was greatly astonished and disturbed, resolving not to see again the person I was then talking with."

This acquaintance must have been exceedingly agreeable, however, for Theresa writes: "I went back to my conversation with the same person, and with others also; and I spent many years in the pestilent amusement; for it never appeared to me, when I was engaged in it, to be so bad as it really was, though at times I saw clearly it was not good." On another occasion, when conversing with this same lady, in company with several others, we are told that they all saw a great toad creeping towards them much faster than was natural to the animal. This trifling incident made a deep impression on our saint. She looked upon it as a super-

natural warning, but she continued her much-loved conversations. Exactly what was the nature of these conversations, and what were the particular sins which Theresa reproaches herself for having committed about this time, a careful study of her own writings, and of those of her different biographers, fails to reveal. Was her conscience, like the conscience of many a religious devotee, supersensitive? Or did she at this period in her life commit some real sin for which she needed to reproach herself? The Roman Church calls Theresa "sinless," and because sinless, honors her with the name of "saint." But that Church's use of the word "saint" has no Scriptural authority, and there are many who have won this title in their last years, whose early lives have been far from pure.

It is certain that in the year 1541, Theresa had yielded to many temptations, though what the nature of these temptations was we shall probably never know. One of the eldest and most pious of the nuns warned her of her danger; but she writes: "I not only did not

listen to her, but was even offended, thinking she was scandalized without cause." By this time, Theresa had begun to neglect all her devotional exercises except the vocal ones prescribed by the rule of the order. At one time mental prayer had been with her a delight. When she first entered the convent, she had even been eager to induce all the sisters to try it, and had converted her father, by means of good books, so that he derived spiritual comfort from this exercise. Don Alfonso used to come often to see his daughter, to talk with her upon religious themes, not knowing how little her own mind was set upon the things of God. She did not dare to tell him the truth about herself; so she said she was not strong enough to attend to any but her choir duties, thus dulling her conscience by a prevarication.

"I saw clearly," she writes, "that this was no excuse whatever; neither, however, was it a sufficient reason for giving up a practice which does not require of necessity bodily strength, but only love and a habit thereof; for our Lord always furnishes an opportunity for it if we but

seek it. I say 'always,' for there may be times, as in illness, and from other causes, when we cannot be much alone, yet it never can be but that there must be opportunities when our strength is sufficient for the purpose; and in sickness itself, and amidst other hindrances, true prayer consists, when the soul loves, in offering up its burden, and in thinking of him for whom it suffers." Don Alfonso, however, never suspected that his daughter was not telling him the truth. He pitied her for her ill health, but never stayed with her long, saying that he was "wasting her time." Theresa writes: "As I was wasting it in other vanities, I cared little about this."

The time was now near at hand when Theresa was to lose her devoted father. He was living entirely alone. All his daughters had left him, and his sons had gone to seek their fortunes in the newly discovered world. When Theresa heard that he was ill, she went with all speed to nurse him; and it was the shock of his death which first aroused her from her lethargic mental and moral condition.

"I went to nurse him," she writes, "more sick in spirit than he was in body, owing to my many vanities. I suffered much during his illness. I believe I rendered him some service in return for what he had suffered in mine. Though I was very ill, I did violence to myself; and though in losing him I was to lose all the comfort and good of my life, — all this he was to me, — I did not betray my sorrow, but concealed it till he was dead, as if I felt none. It seemed as if my very soul were wrenched when I saw him at the point of death, my love for him was so deep."

After Don Alfonso's death, his confessor, Father Vicente, Baron of the Dominican order, took seriously in hand the guidance of Theresa's soul; he had seen her often, as she tenderly ministered to her dying father, and he now gave her some excellent advice about the care of her spiritual health. Father Vicente bade her go to Communion once a fortnight, — a practice which in those days seems to have been unusual in nuns. He also told her never to omit her seasons of mental prayer. Good as Theresa

felt this counsel to be, she was not strong enough to follow it. She could not at once free herself from her old associations.

"My life," she writes, "became more and more wretched, because I learned in prayer more and more of my faults. On the one side God was calling me, on the other I was following the world; all the things of God gave me great pleasure, and yet I was a prisoner to the things of the world. It seemed to me as if I wished to reconcile two contradictions so much at variance one with another as the life of the spirit, and the joys, the pleasures, and the amusements of sense. I suffered much in prayer, for the spirit was slave, and not master, and I was not able to shut up myself within myself, without shutting up with me a thousand vanities at the same time. Very often I was more occupied with the wish to see the end of the time I had appointed for myself to spend in prayer, and in watching the hour-glass, than with other thoughts that were good. If a sharp penance were laid upon me, I know of none that I would not very willingly

have undertaken rather than prepare myself for prayer by self-recollection. The sadness I felt in entering the oratory was so great, that it required all the courage I had to force myself in."

In this miserable state of spiritual paralysis Theresa spent fourteen years. One day would find her prostrate in her oratory, bathed in tears; the following day she would be the centre of an admiring circle of friends and acquaintances. Her spiritual yearnings and aspirations and her practical failures made her a very human kind of saint, and one all of us can understand. Her admirers have called her a "heroine of the spiritual life." But her heroism was of that temper which persists in spite of repeated failures; it did not win in the battle of life without a long and wearisome warfare.

Among the trials which Theresa enumerates in her autobiography as having occurred at about this time, was what she calls "the torture of sermons." "I was very fond of them," she writes. "If I heard any one preach well and with unction, I felt, without my seeking it, a

particular affection for him; neither do I know when it came. Thus no sermon seemed to me so bad but that I listened to it with pleasure, though according to others who heard it the preaching was not good. At one time I had great comfort in sermons; at another time they distressed me, because they made me feel that I was very far from being what I ought to have been."

During these fourteen years, while Theresa's inner life was torn by such conflicting emotions, her outer life changed little. Her father's death, her brother Lawrence's departure for America, and her youngest sister's marriage were the only events of importance. Meantime the temptations of her convent life increased. Each year the Monastery of the Incarnation added to its inmates but not to its income. Young girls in large numbers were received there to be educated, and it became one of the great attractions of the little town of Avila. The noble ladies of the city were called upon to help support the institution, and, in return for their assistance, claimed the right of being

admitted at all hours. Theresa, with her beauty, her originality, and her warm sympathies, was the favorite of all the nuns. She was made the confidante of many a fashionable visitor, and was loved and sought after by all. This love, and the consciousness of pleasing, was her heaven. She could not make up her mind to renounce the human joys of friendship and the pleasure of pleasing, even for conscience' sake.

CHAPTER V.

THERESA'S PERFECT CONVERSION.

NOT until the year 1555, when Theresa was forty years old, did she finally put an end to her dangerous intimacies with seculars. It took twenty years of earnest effort before she could make up her mind to give up the world, which in the ignorance of youth, at twenty, she thought lay crushed beneath her feet. The saying of Job, that "the life of man upon this earth is a continual warfare," she had found to be true. In endeavoring to fly temptations she had only "fallen precipitately into them." As we find noted in Thomas à Kempis, "It is by gradual advances, rather than impetuous efforts, that victory is obtained."

Through all this long season of failure, Theresa had never doubted that the ideal of the monastic life was the highest ideal possible

for her in this world. She deplored her own weakness, but never regretted her vocation. Her aspirations were lofty, the direction of her life was upward, but her will-power was weak. She had one of those restless, passionate natures whose "reach" exceeds their "grasp," and often reminds us of George Eliot, who in "Romola" urges above all things else faithfulness to the marriage-tie, but whose own wedded life was far from being above criticism. With ideals immeasurably superior, and possibilities infinitely greater than those with whom she lived, Theresa failed for twenty years to reach even the conventional standard of duty. Her sensitive, high-strung nature was capable of ascending loftier heights and of sinking into lower abysses than were more commonplace souls. She was, we find, easily moved by all the influences of the senses; the beautiful leaves of the book of Nature, flowers, birds, and all lovely things she used to lift her soul towards God; the outward image was almost indispensable to her special kind of piety. Her mysticism was of a coarser kind than that of Madame Guyon,

and she could not have derived any comfort from the cold, bare forms of Protestant worship. Every deep spiritual experience was with her the direct outcome of some outward sensuous impression. Her fancy was so vivid that it turned the slightest objective occurrences into supernatural warnings. What she calls her "perfect conversion" arose from a strong sensuous impression. We give her own account of it: —

"It came to pass, one day when I went into the oratory, that I saw a picture which they had put by there, and which had been procured for a certain feast to be observed in the house. It was a representation of Christ most grievously wounded, and so devotional that the very sight of it, when I saw it, moved me, so well did it show forth that which he suffered for us. With such keenness did I feel the evil return I had made for those wounds, that I thought my heart was breaking. I threw myself on the ground beside it, my tears flowing plenteously, and implored him to strengthen me once for all, so that I might never offend him any more."

About this time, Theresa again became interested in the "Confessions of Saint Augustine."

The account of his conversion she pondered over, especially dwelling on his words, "How long, O Lord, how long? To-morrow? Why not to-day? Why should not to-day put an end to my baseness?"

"When I began to read these confessions," she writes, "I thought myself described, and I began to recommend myself greatly to this glorious saint. When I came to his conversion, and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it seemed to me nothing less than that our Lord had uttered it for me, I felt it so in my heart." The effect of Saint Augustine's confessions upon Theresa was to completely withdraw her interest from the world. In time, she gave up most of her agreeable friendships, and devoted herself wholly to the things of God. Her nature was one, as we know, which was always prone to extremes; it was not possible for her simply to give up her intimacies with seculars and thereafter lead a commonplace, conscientious religious life. Her enthusiastic spirit and vivid fancy could not be cast in ordinary moulds; they refused to grow symmetri-

cally, and she took a sudden and extraordinary leap from worldliness into ascetism. Soon we find the woman who had been unable to fix her mind upon God long enough to put herself into a condition for mental prayer, the recipient of special spiritual favors. She began, directly after her "perfect conversion," to enjoy what she calls "the prayer of union," and in her autobiography she gives a full account of the mysterious spiritual favors which she received at about this time in her life.

Now, it happened that the whole subject of "Divine favors" in prayer had been exciting much attention in Spain at about this time, owing to the discovery of a certain imposture which had scandalized the Church. A nun, by name Magdalene of the Cross, had entered a convent in Cordova when a mere child, and had attracted much notice by her apparent sanctity. She had been chosen abbess, and in that office had conferred many temporal benefits on the community, her influence bringing to it large offerings. She had several pretended revelations of distant events, such as the captivity of

Francis I., and the like. She was also thought to work miracles. One of these, as reported, was that she was sometimes seen with the Infant Jesus in her arms, and that at such times her hair appeared to reach to her feet. Another legend, showing the absurd credulity of the people, was that when the religious went to Holy Communion, although the particles for consecration had been most carefully counted, the priest would often miss one, which was sure to be found in the mouth of Magdalene of the Cross, as if she had received it at the hands of the angels. It was said that even kings and the Pope commended themselves to her prayers, and that her influence over all around her was overpowering. Suddenly, to the amazement of the whole Catholic world, this sainted woman confessed that all her visions and miracles had been impostures, and that she had really been under the influence of the Devil all the time. The wretched woman was immediately dismissed from her convent and punished by imprisonment; the account of her deception scandalized the whole of Spain

and made even the priests fearful of putting their faith in stories told by visionary nuns.

With Magdalene's experience as a warning, it is no wonder that the friends of Theresa trembled when she spoke of her "Divine favors." She herself thought that her spiritual consolations made her better and more humble; but how could she be sure that they came from the hands of God, and not from the hands of the Devil, who, we must remember, was believed in those days to be a very real and present personage. In great distress of mind, almost in despair, Theresa consulted her excellent kinsman, Don Francis Salvedo, asking him to give her the name of some wise spiritual director. He advised her to consult a priest of great learning, named Gaspar Daza. This priest, though distinguished for both his learning and his piety, did not appear to understand Theresa's case. He was inclined to think that her visions were "diabolical delusions," and advised her to give up the habit of mental prayer altogether. At the same time, doubtful of his own judgment, he bade her seek counsel from one of the new

Society of Jesus, which had lately been established in Avila; for members of this society were supposed to have deep experience in spiritual matters.

The new order of the Jesuits had a great reputation for sanctity, and Theresa knew that if she sent for one of these fathers to confess her, it would attract the attention and comment of all her sister nuns. Therefore when she made up her mind to send for Father Padraños, she begged the portress of the convent to say nothing to the other sisters about his coming. Alas! it was useless to try to keep a secret in a household of two hundred women. Although there was only a single nun at the door when the Jesuit father entered, in a very few minutes all the nuns in the convent knew that Theresa had sent for a Jesuit confessor, and this trifling breach of convent etiquette was talked over and commented upon by all the sisters, who were as ready as boarding-school girls to gossip over one another's doings.

Although a young man, Father Padraños had been carefully trained to an understanding of

the human heart; and he saw in Theresa infinite possibilities. He knew the Roman Church to be in great need at this time of enthusiastic adherents, as most of its votaries were only lukewarm in their devotion; so he thought it best to treat his new penitent with gentleness, and tried to retain all her religious zeal. He did not express any positive opinion about her "Divine favors," but bade her undertake more corporal penance, and spend more time meditating on the humanity of Christ. Theresa learned many valuable spiritual lessons from Father Padraños; he obliged her to break off amusements she had always believed to be innocent, and induced her to lead a more consistent life.

It was at about this time that Saint Francis Borgia came to Avila and stayed there a fortnight. Father Padraños spoke to him of Theresa, and he approved her spirit, and after one or two interviews with her, pronounced her "Divine favors" to be inspirations from God. Soon after this visit of Saint Francis Borgia in Avila, Father Padraños was removed to another post,

and Theresa had again to find a new confessor. "It troubled me much," she writes, "for I thought I should become wicked again; and it seemed impossible to find another like him. My soul appeared to be dwelling in a desert; so very sad and fearful was I, that I knew not what to do with myself."

It is the dependent, human side of Theresa's nature which makes her so attractive a study. She was no cold, bloodless saint, but a true woman in her longing for love and sympathy. After Father Padraños was removed from Avila, Theresa left the convent for a few weeks to visit a friend who lived not far from the Jesuits, and by this friend was persuaded to try a new director. In those days, a woman sang the praises of her own particular confessor much as her modern sister sings the praises of her special physician. Doña Guiomas de Ulloa thought no one could equal her soul's physician; and persuaded by her friend, Theresa tried him as her confessor. He advised her to give up certain friendships to which she still clung as the only links she had with the outside world; and against

this advice Theresa at first rebelled; "but one day, after I had prayed a long time," she writes, "I fell into a trance so suddenly that I was, as it were, carried out of myself. I could have no doubt of it, for it was most plain, and I heard these words, 'I will not have thee converse with men, but with angels.'"

Soon after this vision, Theresa writes: "I have never been able to form friendships with, nor have any particular love for, any persons whatsoever, except those who I believe love God and who strive to serve him."

When Theresa's new confessor, Father Balthasar Alvarez, heard of this and other visions which Theresa had experienced, he felt that he must watch over her spiritual life with great care. He was a sincerely religious man, anxious in all things to promote the glory of God and the good of the Church; and he thought it best to consult several other priests regarding the condition of Theresa's soul. The result of this consultation was the unanimous decision that these extraordinary supernatural visions and locutions were all the work of the Devil. The-

resa, alarmed at this decision, put herself entirely under the control of these priests. They forbade her to communicate frequently, and told her to avoid solitude. One priest even went so far as to tell her to cross herself whenever she had a vision, and to point her finger at it by way of scorn. But still the imaginative girl continued to see and hear all sorts of extraordinary things.

At one time, she said, the Lord appeared to her and took out of her hand the cross of her rosary, returning it to her adorned with four large precious stones incomparably more valuable than diamonds. The five wounds of the Lord were engraven upon them, and the Lord told her that "*the cross would always appear to her as it was; and to no one but herself would it so appear.*" Soon after the occurrence of this vision, came what is known as the Stigmata, or the piercing of her heart with a lance. We will give this legend in her own quaint words: —

"Our Lord was pleased that I should have at one time a vision of this kind. I saw an angel close by me on my left side in bodily form. It was an imagi-

nary vision, seen by the eyes of the soul. This I am not accustomed to see, unless very rarely. Though I have visions of angels frequently, yet I see them only by an intellectual vision. It was the Lord's will that in this vision I should see the angel in this wise. He was not large, but small of stature, and most beautiful; his face burning as if he were one of the highest angels, who seem to be all on fire; they must be those whom we call cherubim. Their names they never tell me, but I see very well that there is in heaven so great a difference between one angel and another, and between them and the others, that I cannot explain it. I saw in his hand a spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails. When he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan, and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain that I could not wish to be rid of it. The pain was not bodily but spiritual, though the body had its share of it. This pain lasted many days. During these days that this lasted I went about as if beside myself. I wished to see and speak with no one, but only to cherish my pain, which was to me a greater bliss than all created things could give me."

What are we to say of this legend? A nineteenth-century historian — who is a Jesuit, and a brother of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge of England — not only vouches for its truth, but tells us that "the wound was not imaginary, but real and material; and that the heart of the saint may still be seen in Avila, with an opening on each side, the rims of which are half burnt." "Credo quia non possunt" might well be the motto of the Roman Church.

No one thought of doubting the possibility of this miracle in the sixteenth century; scholars and theologians were as eager then to find supernatural causes as we now are to find natural ones. Catholic historians of the lives of the saints had what Mr. Huxley would call "a strong affection" for "proving the miraculous to be historical;" they could not take a scientific view of any facts which had a bearing on religious subjects.

After Saint Theresa's most famous vision — the one artists have delighted to picture — she is described as going about her duties quietly, singing softly some verses composed by her-

self at the time she received the wound in her heart.

We give Coleridge's version of them: —

"I felt a blow within my inmost heart,
A sudden blow within this heart of mine;
The Hand that made that wound was hand Divine,
For mighty workings followed from the smart.

"That sudden blow, it left me wounded sore,
Nor ever have I known such utter pain;
And though thereby my very life were slain,
Yet from that death new life sprang forth once more.

"How gives it life, that blow that ends my days?
How causeth death, if life therefrom upbounds?
How doth it heal, the self-same blow that wounds, —
That with itself makes one the life it slays?

"Divine his Hand, of strength beyond compare.
Even in the bitterest struggle of our life
He cleaves in triumph through the surging strife,
And works the works of might which show him there."

CHAPTER VI.

PETER OF ALCANTARA.

AFTER the surprising visions recorded in the last chapter, Theresa made a vow which Catholic historians insist that she kept most faithfully. This vow was nothing less than to seek in her conduct "absolute perfection." It was early in the year 1560 that this vow was made, and later in the same year Theresa met that extraordinary man and saint, Peter of Alcantara. The account left us of his life is so remarkable, and his influence over Theresa was so great, that we must give at least a brief sketch of his life and work. Saint Peter was born in Alcantara, a small Spanish town, in 1499; so that he was sixteen years the senior of Theresa. His father was governor of the town, and his mother came of a good family. He studied law at the University of Salamanca, but after remaining

there two years, returned to Alcantara, having made up his mind to adopt the religious life, and enter the order of St. Francis. During his novitiate he labored sedulously to crucify the flesh; he never lifted his eyes from the ground, and was ignorant whether his cell was ceiled or had bare rafters. For half a year he had charge of the refectory, and — as we must think — selfishly permitted his brethren to go without apples and pomegranates, because he would not lift his eyes to the trees to see whether there were any ripe for the table.

So self-absorbed was this saint, that he did not even know by sight one of the friars with whom he lived for years. He had no other bed than a skin laid on the floor, and he wore only one serge habit, and absolutely no other clothes. One day a visitor came to see him, and was told he was in the garden. The stranger sought him there, and was shocked and abashed to find him stark naked. Saint Peter asked what was wanted, and the visitor replied, "Excuse me, I hardly expected to find you in a condition scarcely decent." "Do

not blame me, but the Gospel," answered Saint Peter, "that commands us to possess but one coat. I have got absolutely nothing but one tunic, and while it is being washed, and dried in the sun, as you see it yonder, I am obliged to go stark naked."

The reputation of Saint Peter having reached the ears of John III., King of Portugal, that prince sent for Peter to visit him, and he was chosen Provincial or Director of the Province of Estramadura, in 1538. In 1541 he went to Lisbon, to join Father Martin in introducing a reform into the Franciscan order. A hermitage was built on the hill of Arabida, where the hermits wore nothing on their feet, lay on fagots and vine-twigs, never ate flesh or drank wine, and took fish only at festivals. In fact, they vied with one another in trying to be uncomfortable, and in thwarting the ordinary needs of the body.

An extravagantly ascetic life, like that led by Saint Peter of Alcantara, was just the kind of an example to arouse the admiration of an imaginative, intense nature like Theresa's.

Here at last she found consistency; here was a true hero, worthy her ardent worship and careful imitation. In due time Peter came to visit Avila. He is described as being "a man of sixty, slender, graceful, and strongly built, a man of extreme modesty and wonderful humility." During his stay in Avila, Theresa had several meetings with him. She confided to him her spiritual difficulties, and received from him much excellent advice. It is probable that he suggested to her the work to which she devoted her last years. When this fanatical old man left Avila, he made Theresa promise to write to him; and she continued in correspondence with him until his death. After his earthly tabernacle — reduced almost to a skeleton — had returned to dust, Theresa wrote the following description of him: —

"He told me that for forty years he slept but an hour and a half out of every twenty-four, and that the most laborious penance he underwent was this of overcoming sleep. For that purpose he was always either kneeling or standing. When he slept, he sat down, his head resting against a piece of wood driven into the wall. To lie down was impossible in his cell,

for every one knows it was only four feet and a half in length. In all these years he never covered his head with his hood, even when the sun was hottest or the rain heaviest. . . . His ordinary practice was to eat but once in three days. He said to me, 'Why are you astonished at it? It is very possible for any one who is used to it.' For many years he never saw a woman's face. He told me it was nothing to him whether he saw it or not. When I saw him, he was an aged man, and his weakness was so great that he seemed like nothing else but the roots of trees. With all his sanctity he was very agreeable, though his words were few, except when he was asked questions."

The visit of Peter in Avila was a great encouragement to Theresa, for he defended her from the spiteful criticism of her sister-nuns, and partly stopped the harsh treatment to which her confessors had subjected her.

It was at the request of Peter of Alcantara that Theresa wrote out a statement of her manner of prayer, and an account of her visions. This work, although one of the curiosities of religious literature to the student, is not of enough general interest to give much time to here. It was undoubtedly sincere in

purpose, and occasionally its language rises into pure and beautiful rhetoric; but in all probability it was written under intense and morbid spiritual excitement; so that to attempt to fathom or explain its mysteries to-day would not be feasible.

Soon after Peter of Alcantara's visit to Avila, Theresa became much depressed. She was always, we must remember, either unduly exalted or unduly cast down. Now even her visions assumed a new and strange form. No longer did she receive special favors from Christ, but she seemed to be delivered over bodily into the power of Satan. One day while she was in her oratory the Devil appeared to her in abominable shape at her left hand. "I looked at his mouth in particular, because he spoke, and it was horrible. A huge flame seemed to issue out of his body, perfectly bright, without any shadow. He spoke in a fearful way, and said to me that though I had escaped out of his hands, he would yet lay hold of me again."

At another time she records: "I saw close

beside me a most frightful little negro, gnashing his teeth in despair at losing what he attempted to seize."

In the light of modern psychological investigations, what are we to think of these statements? We must recollect all the conditions which surrounded our saint; that the *Zeit-Geist* inclined one to be constantly expectant of supernatural occurrences; and then we must take into consideration Theresa's own imaginative mind and diseased bodily condition; she was never a robust woman, and her nervous organization was super-sensitive. With these facts to direct our investigations, we may find that Theresa's famous visions appear less mysterious. Modern writers class them all in the great category of mental hallucinations; but the new definition does not bring us much nearer the truth than the old. The various vagaries of the human mind are as inexplicable to-day as they were four centuries ago; and the wisest of physicians and philosophers stand aside abashed at the wide chasm which still separates "gray matter" and thought.

Theresa found little comfort in prayer while she was troubled with these distressing visions; her mental condition was anything but peaceful, and she longed for a more active objective life.

"The inward stirrings of my love," said she, "urge me to rise and do something for the service of God; and I am not able to do more than adorn pictures with boughs and flowers, clean or arrange an oratory, or some other trifling act, so that I am ashamed of myself."

Theresa, at the age of forty, with an energy which in the nineteenth century would surely have led her to adopt a professional or active philanthropic life, was tied down to a daily routine of trifling duties which were both tiresome and unsatisfying. After twenty years of convent life she found herself as far as ever from inward peace. No sooner was her heart swept clean of one devil of discontent than it took unto itself seven other spirits yet more wicked, and the last state of that heart was worse than the first.

There is much in Theresa's nervous, overwrought mental condition which calls forth our pity; but her confessors also have need of our sympathy, for she was utterly unreasonable in her demands upon them, and changed from one to another on the slightest pretext. She was full of whimsical complaints against her sister nuns, and was anything but an agreeable inmate of the Incarnation. She found no comfort in her friends, since she says "to converse with any one is worse; for the Devil sends me so offensive a spirit of bad temper, that I think I could eat people up. I feel that I do something if I keep myself under control."

This intense physical nervousness and irritability made Theresa's life a burden to herself and to her friends. At one time she thought of leaving the convent and going to another monastery, in which enclosure was more strictly observed, thinking it would be a great consolation to her to live where she was not known; but her superiors would not let her go.

At this time the Convent of the Incarnation had grown so poor that the sisters sometimes

did not have enough to eat. Many wealthy persons were in the habit of sending for the nuns to visit them, and the superior of the convent had politic reasons for insisting that these invitations should be accepted. Theresa writes complainingly of "this inconvenience of going out." She could not go into the world for even a brief time without forgetting her good resolutions and turning away from God. But this long period of mental and bodily misery was near its end, and a new life was about to open which should put into active use all Theresa's dormant energies.

"Even in a palace," wrote Marcus Aurelius, "life can be lived well;" so even in a convent a woman's will can break the fetters which bind her in, and push out into the world of action, if her purpose — that is, her faith — be only strong enough not to be shaken by obstacles which at first sight seem insurmountable.

CHAPTER VII.

THERESA PLANS HER REFORM.

LITTLE is said, in Theresa's autobiography, regarding her daily life at the Incarnation Convent. She alludes very rarely to any of the sisters individually. Her friendship with Juaño Suarez continued, and in 1560 she mentions taking a young niece under her charge. We are told by several historians that this niece, Maria de Okampo, was the first to suggest the great Carmelite reform. But from our study of Theresa's life and the strong influence which Peter of Alcantara held over her, we are inclined to think the project arose at the time this saint made his visit in Avila. It must have been the example of the devoted Peter which first put this plan into Theresa's head; although the seed was deeply implanted in the ground a long time before it showed any signs of life.

Most Spanish writers, however, give the following account of the beginnings of the reform. Maria de Okampo, a girl of sixteen or seventeen, more remarkable for her love of finery than for her piety, was spending the afternoon of a certain feast-day in her aunt's cell. Quite a number of nuns were gathered there, and, paradoxical as it may seem, this social group fell to discussing the joys of solitude. They discussed the difficulties of leading a strict religious life in a convent as large as that of the Incarnation; and the young Maria de Okampo said, with an air of great seriousness, "Let us all go and live in solitude like hermits." This new idea was eagerly caught up by all present, and some cousins of Theresa — Maria Eleanora, Inez, and Anna de Tapia — began on the spot, with Juaño Suarez, to talk over the feasibility of the plan. Theresa is said to have been delighted with it, and to have mentioned the conversation to her friend, Guiomas de Ulloa, saying: "What do you think these girls have been talking about? Nothing less than of founding a little convent where we might all go and live like Barefooted Franciscans."

Now, Maria de Okampo was wealthy, and at once offered a thousand ducats of her fortune to defray the expenses of the undertaking. But is it not reasonable to suspect the restless, energetic Theresa of having proposed the scheme to her at some other time? Without the assistance of Maria's purse, Theresa could have done nothing.

Doña Guiomas, always a devoted friend of Theresa, interested herself warmly in the new project. Angel visitors took the place of Theresa's "blue devils," and assured her that "the monastery would certainly be built, and that Saint Joseph would keep guard at one door and Our Lady at the other, and that it would become a star shining in great splendor."

Encouraged by this agreeable vision, Theresa wrote to Father Balthasar Alvarez; but he thought the scheme absurd, and although he did not actually forbid it, refused to aid it without the consent of the Provincial, or director, of the Carmelites. The Provincial, by name Father Angelo, knew that reforms had been accomplished in other orders, and was rather

pleased at the thought of a Reform among the Carmelites also, and Peter of Alcantara, still alive, also wrote Theresa a letter congratulating her on her plans. On the whole, the scheme met with more favor than had been expected. Of course, there were fault-finders. Was there ever any kind of new reform instituted, without much adverse criticism? All the good people who had feared that Theresa's visions came from Satan were ready to carp at the new movement. The idle, gossipy folk in Avila expressed themselves as scandalized with these new-fangled notions. Why was not Theresa satisfied to remain in her own convent? Who was she, that she should think herself fit to reform a whole order like that of the Carmelites? Some of the priests were indignant enough that a woman should even make such a suggestion. One priest refused Doña Guiomas de Ulloa absolution on Christmas Day unless she would promise to have nothing to do with the plan. When it was learned that the Provincial actually looked with approval on the proposed Reform, the whole city rose up in

opposition. For women to undertake outside work in those days seemed preposterous; they were looked upon as unfit for any serious occupations. In the face of this strong public opinion, Father Angelo, who must have been rather a weak brother, withdrew his permission, and Theresa received a command from Father Balthasar "not to occupy herself any further with the business."

The decision of the Provincial caused the little band of radicals great grief. It was a severe trial to be forced to give up their plan, and it was not easy to continue life in the Incarnation Convent among the same sisters whose rules they had publicly condemned. The abbess was very angry with Theresa for stirring up so much commotion, and even her confessor blamed her severely. Some strength of character was necessary to persist in the new reform. This strength of character Theresa had; and it was her own cheerful courage which kept alive her companions' superficial interest. Doña Guiomas and Father Ybanez had taken up her side devotedly, and had written to Rome to

obtain the necessary permission from the Holy See. Six months were spent in waiting patiently for this permission. Theresa was laughed at and persecuted by all the sisters within the convent, and outside, in Avila, had many enemies. Once when she went into the town to church the preacher directed his sermon at her, pointing her out as a foolish, restless nun. The arrival of a new rector at the House of the Society of Jesus in Avila made the prospects of those engaged in the Reform look brighter, for he advised her confessors not to discourage her plans. He even expressed confidence enough in the Reform to advise Theresa to begin to collect funds. A suitable house was the first thing to be thought of, as Theresa's niece had already given enough money to pay for it. When one was found, Theresa begged her sister Juaño to come to Avila and make the purchase as if for herself. After Juaño's arrival, Theresa obtained leave to spend much time with her sister; and thus in strict secrecy the property was changed into a convent.

Many legends have been handed down to us,

describing events which are said to have happened during the early days of the Reform. Theresa tells us that she was visited by every saint in the calendar, and told to continue her work; that the Blessed Virgin came, and, in token of her approval, hung around her neck an *invisible* collar of gold. But in spite of all these signs of approbation given her by supernatural authorities, for a long time no news arrived from Rome. As the improvements made on the house progressed, there was great danger lest Theresa's secret would be detected, and that people would begin to suspect the purpose for which it was designed.

It has already been said that the lax rules of the Incarnation Convent permitted frequent and long absences on the part of the nuns. Now Theresa, what with her various visions and ambitious projects, had obtained a reputation throughout all Spain for her sanctity, and was much in request to comfort noble families in times of affliction. A certain lady of high rank, Doña Luisa de la Cerda, of Toledo, overwhelmed with grief at her husband's death, sent

to the convent for Theresa to come and comfort her in her affliction. Father Angelo wrote to Theresa telling her that she could not refuse the invitation of a lady in such a high position. But at this time all Theresa's interest was centred in her new enterprise, and she was very reluctant to leave Avila; her friends, however, agreed that it was her duty to go to Doña Luisa, and she finally started on her journey to Toledo, escorted by her excellent brother-in-law. Just before her departure, her brother Lorenzo sent her from South America a considerable sum of money to aid her new Reform.

The visit to Toledo was much more agreeable than Theresa anticipated. She was received with great warmth, and under her gentle ministrations Doña Luisa soon regained her peace of mind. Theresa's personal influence was always wonderful; she could find her way by sympathy into the hearts of young and old. The whole of Doña Luisa's household soon grew to look upon this saintly nun, who had succeeded in soothing their mistress's sorrow,

with the profoundest veneration. It is reported that many used to gather around her door to watch her at her prayers, and that several were so struck with her piety that they expressed a desire to renounce the world.

The mansion owned by Doña Luisa was a large and spacious one; it was more like a palace than an ordinary dwelling. The life led by most of its inmates was a life of fashion and frivolity. Late hours were kept, there was much feasting done, and money was thrown away on every kind of needless luxury. Had Theresa been younger, her impressionable nature would surely have been fascinated by the glitter and gayety of the new life which now opened to her. But she was now over forty, and the things of this world had ceased to attract her. "The more I saw," she wrote, "the greater my contempt. I saw that Doña Luisa, with all her high position, was a woman, and as much liable to passion and weakness as I was; that rank is of little worth, and that the higher it is the greater the anxiety and trouble it brings. People must be careful of the dignity of their state, which will

not suffer them to live at ease; they must eat at fixed hours and by rule, for everything must be according to their state and not according to their constitution; and they have frequently to take food fitted more for their state than for their liking. So I soon came to hate the very wish to be a great lady. God deliver me from this wicked, artificial life! Though I believe that this lady, notwithstanding that she was one of the chief personages of the realm, was a woman of great simplicity, and that few were more humble than she was. I was very sorry for her, and I saw how often she had to submit to much that was disagreeable to her, because of the requirements of her rank. Then, as to servants; though the lady had very good servants, yet how slight is the trust that may be put in them. One must not be conversed with more than another; otherwise he who is so favored is envied by the rest. This in itself is slavery; and one of the lies of the world is that it calls such persons masters, who, in my opinion, are nothing else but slaves in a thousand ways."

As we read Theresa's reflections upon the ceremonies and etiquette observed in Doña Luisa's house, we can see that she sincerely despised them. The one wish of her soul was that she might carry out her new Reformation.

During the six months she spent in Toledo, Theresa made the acquaintance of another famous nun, named Maria de Jesus. She was a lady of rank and fashion, who had married at an early age and been left a widow. She then became a novice in the Carmelite convent of her native place. The immense number of the nuns and the Relaxed Rule displeased her; and, encouraged by her confessor, she determined to appeal to the Pope and get permission to reform the order. She made a journey to Rome barefoot; and the Pope, looking at her bleeding feet, said to her, "Woman of strong courage, be it to thee as thou wilt." Sister Maria then returned from Rome and founded a convent at Alcala. The little group of women who lived with her kept what is known as the Primitive Rule, and from them Theresa learned much about the practical ar-

rangements she must make before she could carry out her reform. Another matter which kept Theresa busy in Toledo was her autobiography. She had been asked to write it by Father Ybanez, and she finished it in June, 1562.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET REMOVAL TO ST. JOSEPH'S.

THERESA left Toledo soon after she finished her autobiography, and on arriving at Avila found that the long-expected brief had arrived. It was dated in February, 1562, and gave Theresa permission to proceed with her work, placing the new monastery under the direct control of the bishop, instead of the Carmelite superior. The inmates of the new convent had already been selected with great care, for all interested in the reform felt that on their character and devotion largely depended the success of the new foundation. There were to be twelve inmates in St. Joseph's Convent, but at first Theresa began with only four besides herself. It was of the greatest importance that these four should be one in spirit and enthusiasm.

The name of one of these chosen sisters was Antonia of the Holy Ghost. She had been suggested by Peter of Alcantara, and had been from her youth a model child; it was said that when only seven years old she had received a Divine intimation of her calling. The second of the four sisters, Ursula of the Saints, was made of quite different material. She had always been fond of gayety, and in her youth, balls and bull-fights had been her delight. Her conversion had been sudden, and was the work of Master Gaspar Daga, who was a long time inducing her to take the veil. The other two sisters who accompanied Theresa were the two Marys, — Mary of the Cross and Mary of St. Joseph's.

The habit worn by these Discalced Carmelites was made of rough white serge; their veils were coarse unbleached linen, and their feet were bare. The house which had been purchased and secretly prepared for them was small, but large enough to include a tiny chapel. A narrow corridor led from the nuns' apartments to this chapel, and over the doors

and at either end were placed images of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph. A little bell, only three pounds in weight, was hung in a hollow of the wall to summon the community to Mass. The simplicity and poverty of the new convent were extreme. The sisters were forbidden to have any ornaments in their cells, and the strictest rules were to be followed about fasting and prayer.

The new monastery was opened, Aug. 24, 1562, Mass being said by Gaspar Daga. All this was done with the utmost secrecy, and even the prioress of the Incarnation knew nothing of the undertaking until the first ceremonies were over.

Theresa "felt as it were in bliss," to see her cherished dream fulfilled, and her new work begun; but hardly had her first day in the little convent come to an end, when the angry prioress of the Incarnation, indignant at all these secret proceedings, sent for the chief transgressor to return to her old convent immediately. Both the prioress and the Provincial were bitterly opposed to this "setting up of

novelties." The city of Avila professed itself to be scandalized, and "the outcry was very great against the four orphans who had dared to make a religious home for themselves, where they could serve God, as they believed, more faithfully."

When the Provincial and the prioress heard that the little band of sisters had a brief from the Pope, they "softened a little," but it was four months before Theresa was permitted to return to her new home. "To relate in detail the heavy trials we passed through would be tedious," Theresa writes. "I wondered at what Satan did against a few poor women, and also how people thought we could be so hurtful to the city."

Theresa had created a revolution on a small scale; she had planned and carried out an unheard-of undertaking, and emancipated herself from the authorities of the Incarnation Convent forever. Was it strange that her doings caused scandal, and that she became a "nine days' wonder" in the city? When permitted to return to her new convent, she found that her

four associates had gone on patiently singing and praying, and had striven zealously to keep up the severe rules they had worked so hard to formulate.

Theresa had added many mortifications to those prescribed by the original Carmelite Rule. There was to be perpetual abstinence from meat, rigorous silence and retirement, and a fast of eight months every year. The sisters were obliged to sleep upon sacks of straw, and for dinner had only coarse bread and vegetables. Matins were recited in the choir three hours before midnight, because, we read in the traditions, "At that hour no other religious institution is offering praise to God."

Great joy was felt in the convent at Theresa's return; four new novices soon joined the community, one of them being Maria de Okampo, who had already given much, and now gave all her fortune, to aid her aunt in her work. Another of Theresa's relatives to enter St. Joseph's was Doña Maria de Aulas, the only daughter of a certain nobleman, Alonzo Avarez, who had all his life won respect for his great

piety. This girl, heiress to a large fortune, was exceedingly proud; she had refused, with haughty disdain, many brilliant alliances, and it was only after a severe interior struggle that she made up her mind to enter St. Joseph's, and give herself up to a religious life. She arrived at the convent dressed in her richest robes, which glittered with golden ornaments and precious stones; but when she had been received in the choir and had put on the simple Carmelite garb, "a flood of peace" is said "to have come over her soul."

The rule which was observed at St. Joseph's was known as the "Primitive Rule of the order of Mount Carmel;" it had been drawn up by Saint Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in 1205. This rule had been modified by Eugenius IV.; and it was the mitigation of the rule of Saint Albert that obtained in the Convent of the Incarnation. The original rule had ordered that the religious should fast from the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14) to the feast of Easter. The Mitigation allowed this fast to be omitted except on Wednesdays,

Fridays, and Saturdays. The rule established by Theresa, however, was strict as to the observance of fasting and abstinence. The rule as to prayer was: Matins recited at nine in the evening; after this a quarter of an hour given to an examination of the actions of the day; then the religious read over the points of the mystery on which they were to meditate the next morning. At eleven o'clock the bell rang, and they went to rest. In summer, the nuns rose at five, and meditated until six. In winter, they rose at six, and meditated until seven. The Hours were said before Mass. The time arranged to be spent in work was occupied in simple spinning, instead of the elaborate embroidery which occupied the attention of the sisters at the Incarnation. One strange rule laid down by Theresa was, that no religious was to have a fixed amount of work given to her, lest she should give herself to it with excessive ardor. The sisters were obliged to work alone, instead of in one common room. Dinner was of course early, and a little before dinner a bell rang for self-examination. Vespers were said at

two o'clock, and afterwards an hour was given to spiritual reading; at three o'clock came another hour of prayer, and then a brief period of recreation.

The vow of poverty was enforced. No sister could have any property of her own. There were no chests or drawers in the cells, and if any religious was observed to be attached to the least thing, it was taken from her. The habit, scapular, mantle, veil, and in fact the whole of the sisters' dress, bed furniture, and linen, were to be of the poorest kind. Besides these rules, there was the obligation to go barefoot in all seasons. There were to be two planks in every bed, and only a single covering. Think of the entire change of life forced upon the two young Spanish heiresses!

The persons to be received as novices were to be in good health, of good understanding, at least seventeen years old, and animated by a true desire to lead a devout religious life. The *grille* was not to be opened, or the nuns allowed to raise their veils to speak with any but their nearest relatives. Chapters were to be

held once a week, in which they accused themselves of their faults and aided one another in pointing out their spiritual failings.

Theresa herself tried to be the model for all in the convent. She was frequently occupied in the most menial duties, sweeping out the dirtiest places, and helping often in the kitchen. She forbade the common practice in vogue among the nuns of the Incarnation, of giving to the sisters the title of Doña or Lady. She preferred that they should call one another "Sister," or "Your Charity." She herself, as prioress, wished to be called simply "Mother."

The five years Theresa spent at St. Joseph's were among the happiest of her life. Here she was for the first time able to use her strength and energy to some purpose. At last she felt herself to be a real power for good in the world. Her restless nature and vague ambition found a deep satisfaction in a life of conscious power and usefulness, which called out all that was best in her mind and heart. In this little convent Theresa was surrounded by love, and lived in

an atmosphere of sympathy. Her nature was like a delicate plant; it could come to its full perfection only when all the influences were favorable.

"I lived five years in the Convent of St. Joseph's," she wrote, "and the tranquillity and calmness of that happy time my soul has often longed for."

In Theresa's management of St. Joseph's convent there was one virtue which she valued greatly, — the virtue of obedience, — blind, passive, unquestioning obedience. She gives this incident to illustrate the intellectual subjection under which she tried to keep the nuns: "One day, in the refectory, a few cucumbers were given us at our meal; a very small one, rotten inside, fell to my share. Appearing not to be aware of this, I called one of the sisters, and, to *try her obedience*, told her to plant the cucumber in our garden. The sister asked if she should plant it upwards or downwards, and I said, 'Downwards.' Immediately she did so, without the thought occurring to her that it would wither; for her esteem for obe-

dience so brought her natural reason into the captivity of Christ as to make her believe the thing quite proper to be done." This mechanical obedience Theresa habitually imposed on her novices. There must be a complete surrender of the intellect to the spiritual director, she thought, or all effort after a religious life was vain. The vow of obedience was the first one to be kept. Another stringent rule which Theresa enforced, was that of forbidding the nuns to make intimate friends. Among the sisters in St. Joseph's all must be loved alike, and all loved "in Christ."

When we reflect on the strict ascetic life led by these sisters, so barren of all human interest and beauty, it seems to us as if it would have been hardly endurable. Yet the nuns, and Theresa herself, wrote of being happy. The truth is, as a French writer puts it epigrammatically, "Dès que l'homme a trouvé à cette existence un *pourquoi* qui le satisfairent, le *comment* le laisse à peu près indifférent." The sisters of St. Joseph's believed that the life they led was pleasing to Deity. For every

pang they suffered, they believed they should enjoy "an exceeding great reward." It was this firm faith in the object of their life which made them willing to submit to its many privations.

As we study Theresa's conduct in the capacity of prioress, we see that she must have possessed unusual tact and worldly wisdom. The position was not an agreeable one, but Theresa made all who obeyed her rule love her. Perhaps one reason for this was, that she never asked a novice to do anything which she herself would have been unwilling to do; another, that she sincerely loved all the sisters, and was ready to listen to their most trivial confidences with sympathy and affection. The need of sometimes enjoying a little relaxation she also appreciated, and tried to make the hour of recreation as pleasant as possible.

"What would become of our little house," she used to say, "if no one should try to be agreeable to the others? We none of us have too much wit. Let us each try to use what we have for the good of all. Let us not

imitate foolish people who do not dare to speak or breathe for fear their religion will fly away."

Although Theresa endeavored to make the recreation hours agreeable, she insisted that the sisters should not have visits from those outside the convent. "I know better than you," she would say, "the harm done by talking too much with externs. Be polite to all who come to see you, but restrain your unruly tongues, and let your conversation be 'Yea, yea,' and 'nay, nay,' as the Gospel directs."

During the four busy, quiet years which Theresa enjoyed as prioress she found time to write what is called her most famous book; it is known by the name of "The Way of Perfection." In it she gave much sensible advice to the nuns of St. Joseph's, — indeed, to all nuns; and the book contains also wise reflections which bear on the practical as well as on the religious life. It breathes a spirit of devout Mysticism, and yet is not without flashes which show a keen woman's wit. In this work we find her celebrated remark about the

foolishness of anything like magnificence in religious building: "Everything is to fall to pieces at the day of judgment, and it would not be becoming that the dwelling of thirteen poor nuns should make a great noise when it falls."

CHAPTER IX.

TWO NEW CONVENTS.

WHEN Theresa first planned the foundation of St. Joseph's Convent, she had no idea of undertaking a reformation which should spread through the whole Carmelite order. She herself felt the need of living a more solitary religious life, and it seemed a very simple project to leave the larger convent with a few intimate friends, and form a smaller, more devoted religious community. But once this object was accomplished, her ambitious spirit sought to conquer new kingdoms. Her little band of nuns were so content in the new convent, and all expressed themselves as being so delighted with the Primitive Rule, that Theresa felt encouraged to enlarge the field of her usefulness. A visit from General Rossi left her in high spirits; for he praised St. Joseph's, and gave

the prioress a letter conferring on her the power to establish as many more convents as she could, and censured severely any provincial who should oppose her foundations. The General also gave her permission to found two monasteries of men who should also adopt the Primitive Rule.

Just at this time the Roman Church found itself in a very critical condition. It was conscious of its own weakness, and obliged to recognize the evident growth of the Lutheran doctrines; yet it could do little to prevent its convents and monasteries from degenerating into dens of iniquity. On the one side it was confronted with the rapid increase of those it termed heretics; on the other, with the equally rapid decay of sincere piety within its own borders. A zealous Catholic who earnestly desired to promote the true interests of the Church was not often to be found in those demoralized days. The Jesuit Fathers were wise enough to recognize in Theresa an absolute devotion to the Catholic faith; from this woman, whose education had been limited, no heresy was to

be feared, and she might be the means of strengthening and purifying the Church. This, then, was the train of reasoning which induced General Rossi and other Catholic authorities to put so much power into a woman's hands. In Theresa, they saw a tool that might be safely employed in building new convents, and yet one which would be sure to work only within prescribed limits. The Roman Church required of its instruments blind obedience. To find it combined with ardent missionary zeal was not common.

Soon after obtaining from General Rossi permission to continue her work, Theresa began to plan for a new convent. Her first move was to write to Father Balthasar Alvarez, who was rector of a college in Medina, and ask him to find a house where she might start another foundation. Father Balthasar Alvarez entered into Theresa's plan with great earnestness, and succeeded in finding her a suitable house at a moderate price. Unfortunately the house was badly out of repair; but not discouraged by this, Theresa determined to take

possession of it at once. Accompanied by two inmates of St. Joseph's and four of her old friends from the Incarnation, she started on her journey.

The sisters travelled in four or five carriages, taking with them every piece of furniture which could be spared from St. Joseph's. During the journey, the nuns followed the exact order of religious exercises pursued in the convent they had left. A little bell marked the duration of each hour, and the time was indicated by an hour-glass. The friars, the priests, and even the drivers were obliged to follow the same rule. Silence was enforced constantly, save in the hour set aside for recreation; and the sisters were obliged to keep their veils down, so that they might not be seen even by women. The little party travelled all day and until midnight before reaching their destination. They went on foot through the streets of Medina del Campo, in order to make no disturbance. "It was a wonder," Theresa writes, "that we did not come to some trouble, for the bulls which were to fight the next day were being driven out through the

streets as we passed." When the sisters reached the house, they found it very much out of repair. "But not so much so as afterwards by daylight," Theresa wrote.

What a strange, adventurous expedition was this for these quiet nuns, whose life had been so long shut out from the world of action! But they did not have much time to think of its novelty, as they all had to work hard to make the ruined building habitable. For once, Marys gave up their praying to become Marthas, as the dirt of ages had to be scrubbed and brushed away before they could even decide whether or not the building was fit to be used. The decoration of the room they wished for their chapel was the most important part of their work. They had been given some rare bits of damask and pieces of tapestry, which they arranged behind the altar to get a good effect of color. Some cleaned the floors, some cleared away the rubbish, while others tried to conceal the discolored walls by hangings, and to arrange a few flowers on the altar. The result of all this energetic industry was seen at daybreak, when

the bell was hung and the chapel ready for the celebration of Mass.

With our knowledge of Theresa's character, it is easy for us to imagine the eagerness which she put into that hasty night's work. George Herbert's lines, —

> "A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine;
> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
> Makes that and th' action fine,"

apply admirably to this midnight adventure. The high purpose sanctified the useless work. It is this thought we must keep in mind through all our studies of monastic life.

These earnest workers were seriously disappointed when, the next morning, they were obliged to leave their newly decorated chapel and betake themselves to the house of a kindly nobleman. Here they lived for two months, while the convent was put in decent repair. Their noble friend gave them the upper part of his house, where the Primitive Rule could be followed out exactly as it had been followed in St. Joseph's.

While Theresa was in Medina, she met for the first time a young theological student named Juan of St. Mathias, a name afterwards changed to Saint John of the Cross. This meeting proved to be momentous in the light of subsequent proceedings; for the young man consented to join the Carmelite Reform. The good prior Heredia, a much older man, also promised to join the Reform; so that before Theresa left Medina she had, as she playfully expressed it, "a friar and a half" ready to help her in her great work.

In October, 1567, Theresa left Inez of Jesus and Anne of the Incarnation as prioress and sub-prioress of the new convent, and went herself to Madrid. She took with her the sister of the Bishop of Avila and another friend. In Madrid, her friends did their best to make a "lion" of her, but she refused to display her piety, and the strangers who visited her went away disappointed, because she talked to them about the sights in the city, and the beautiful scenery, and could not be persuaded to amuse them by giving a glowing account

of her visions. Her religious experiences were too sacred to be paraded before curious and unsympathetic people.

From Madrid, Theresa journeyed to Alcala. There Maria de Jesus had established a convent of Reformed Carmelites; but she had been too severe in her government, and gone far towards ruining the health of all the nuns. Great wisdom was required in a prioress to keep the nuns in health, and yet deprive them of all the good things of life. Theresa remained in Alcala until the middle of February, 1568. She watched over the feeble sisters in this convent, and left them all in better health and spirits. From Alcala she went to Toledo, and thence to begin a new foundation at Malagon. Here the parish priest aided her most cordially. The first house selected proved to be in a noisy locality. Then Doña Luisa offered to provide funds to build a chapel and convent in a beautiful field of olive-trees not far from her castle. Theresa was delighted with this plan, and in her eagerness to have the building completed spent much time with

the workmen; some writers record that she herself assisted in the mechanical work. The first prioress of Malagon was named Anne of All the Angels. Theresa writes her kind friend Doña Luisa regarding the new convent: —

"The sisters are very happy. We have decided that for the instruction of little girls a woman should be engaged, — a *Theatine* (a woman Jesuitical in spirit). The convent is to feed her; it will do this. *We* must give something in the way of alms, and it may as well be in this way. This woman will teach, gratis, the little girls to work, and by this means, having them in her own hands, she will teach them the Christian doctrines and their duties towards God. . . . The religious are so fervent; they have an excellent confessor, and the parish priest is devoted to them. . . . I forgot to tell you that our Father has spoken to me of a religious who, besides knowing how to read very well, has qualities which please him. She has only two hundred ducats; but our sisters are so few, and the want so great in the convent, which is only beginning, that I am of opinion that she should be received. I prefer to take a girl of this sort to one who is stupid; and if I find another like her, I shall admit no others. Good-by, my dear lady. I do not like to end, and I do not know how I can go away from one I love so much, and to whom I am under such great obligations."

After leaving Malagon, Theresa hastened to a place called Durvelo, where a young gentleman of Avila had offered her a house which he owned, that she might there found a monastery of Discalced friars. It was about this time that Theresa's close intimacy with Saint John of the Cross began; but her relations with this remarkable man, and their influence over each other, deserve an entire chapter.

CHAPTER X.

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS.

SAINT JOHN of the Cross is known as one of the great Mystics of the world. Saint Theresa and Saint John of the Cross have always stood together as concrete examples of Mysticism. This curious word has found all sorts of definitions, — a definition, we might say, has arisen to meet the needs of every age. The poets have called it "the romance of religion;" while sceptical scientists tell us that "Mysticism, whether in religion or philosophy, is that form of error which mistakes for a divine manifestation the operation of a merely human faculty." There is the Mysticism which has hidden itself in the cloister, and the Mysticism which has spent itself in hopeless attempts to reform the world. There have been Mystics who have been willing to accept all the dogmas

of the Church of Rome, and Mystics who have carried the religion of negation so far that they really have been in the exact position occupied by our nineteenth-century Agnostics, and confessed that they "could not know anything about the Infinite, but could simply gaze with closed eyes, and receive impressions, lost in the silent, boundless Dark of the Divine Substance." Thus the circle completes itself; and, paradoxical as it may seem, Mysticism and Agnosticism touch hands and hearts.

In the history of Mysticism we find noted the philosophical perfection of the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria, and the monastic perfection of the Spanish monks. We read of Mysticism which has been a force for good, and has driven men to perform deeds requiring the utmost heroism; and then we turn over a few pages, to find that certain kinds of Mysticism have degenerated into the wildest license. There is a disease which we may perhaps term "Hysterical Mysticism." The sufferers from this malady pass days and nights in swoons and mysterious ecstasies; young girls and middle-

aged women are specially susceptible to these symptoms, and undoubtedly many of the saints in the Roman calendar were unconscious sufferers from it. Then there is still another form of Mysticism, which is not emotional, but intellectual. In one age this form of Mysticism calls itself Theism; in another, Pantheism. But in every age both monks and philosophers are agreed in claiming for the word the idea of initiation into something hidden, — some knowledge which can only be attained by a certain peculiar kind of mental training. The Roman Catholic theologians who have written upon this subject use the term "Mysticism" to denote a religion of the heart as opposed to either scholasticism or ritualism, and undoubtedly Mysticism has usually flourished in a time of formalism in religion; it has appeared as a kind of reaction against religious torpor. The human soul, in despair, abandons symbols, earthly distinctions, and mental processes, to learn "experimentally that God far transcends all images, — corporeal, spiritual, or divine." Human beings, weary of the world and its fleeting joys,

in every age and nation, have been at times filled with passionate yearnings after rest and peace. In this mood they have always gone outside of forms, and communed in their own hearts with God.

> "On Divine Love to meditate is peace,
> And makes all care of meaner things to cease."

In times of languid longings for repose, and heart-weariness, the weak have felt the subtle charm of Mysticism; while stronger souls have tried by its aid to pierce the barriers that hide from man the unseen world.

Some Mystics have been called "spiritual lotus-eaters," for they have seemed to find no joy but calm. But to others besides these "spiritual lotus-eaters" the gentle words of Thomas à Kempis, Madame Guyon, and Molinos still come like soothing anodynes. Well is it for us, in this material age, that we can rely on the words of these spiritual teachers, for man may not live "by bread alone;" and some of these great prophets have with rare sweetness voiced the will of God.

In our own age there is a reaction against

scepticism and materialism which has much in common with certain forms of Mysticism. That passing phase of mental entanglement which is called Mental or Christian Science is far from being a new growth. It is spiritually related to the great historic religious school of Quietism. The germ of truth it possesses is spiritual truth, which has been in the world for at least eighteen centuries.

> "The Love of Thee flows just as much
> As that of ebbing self subsides;
> Our hearts, their scantiness is such,
> Bear not the conflict of two rival tides."

In losing self in God, the Christian Scientist finds health, the Mystic finds peace. The words are really synonyms.

"The loving soul," writes Ludovic Blosius, "flows down, I say, falls away from herself, and, reduced as it were to nothing, melts and glides away altogether into the abyss of Eternal Love. Then, dead to herself, she lives in God, knowing nothing, perceiving nothing, except the love she tastes. For she loses herself in that vastest solitude, the darkness of

Divinity; but thus to lose, is in fact to find herself. Then, putting off whatsoever is human, and putting on whatever is divine, she is transformed and transmuted into God, as iron in a furnace takes the form of fire, and is transmuted into fire." The Faith Cure, according to the definition of one of its writers, "uses all its powers to start the human recipient life-current out of its mortal prison, so that meeting the ever-present Divine current, it enables that Divine current to enter its sufferer and fill him with new life." These two quotations prove how closely Mysticism and Christian Science are bound together. Thus the fashionable fad of the nineteenth century is only a new form of stating the great truth that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Vaughan, one of the greatest authorities on Mysticism, divides the subject into three parts, — theopathetic, theosophic, and theurgic. He then subdivides the first of these divisions into the transitive and the intransitive. By theopathetic, Vaughan means that Mysticism which resigns itself in a passivity more or less abso-

lute to an imaginary Divine manifestation. One Mystic of this order may do nothing, while another may believe himself driven to be ceaselessly active. Whether one believes himself to be "a leaf driven by a mighty rushing wind of the spirit," or "a mirror in which Deity glasses himself," the principle of passivity is the same. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works," said the greatest of all Mystics, the Galilean Teacher, Jesus Christ.

In the *intransitive* division of theopathetic Mysticism we find such names as Ruybroek, Molinos, and almost all the great Quietists. In the *transitive* division come all the turbulent prophets and crazy fanatics.

Now, for the second division of Mysticism. The German writers call Mysticism "Theosophy" when it is applied to natural science. The Theosophist is one who holds a theory of God which has not reason but an inspiration of his own for its basis. Theosophic Mysticism aspires to know and believes itself in

possession of a certain "divine faculty" for that purpose.

The third division of this subject, theurgic Mysticism, covers that form of Mysticism which claims supernatural powers and works miracles. Religious magicians belong to this class. "Whether the Mystic seeks the triumph of superhuman knowledge, or that intoxication of the feelings which is to translate him to the upper world, after a time he is apt to crave a sign. Theurgy is the art which brings that sign. Its appearance, whether in philosophy or religion, is the first symptom of *failing faith*."

In the fourteenth century, Mysticism went hand in hand with considerable freedom of thought; but in the sixteenth century the Roman Church was conscious of its possible dangers, and permitted it to exist only as it subserved some ecclesiastical scheme. In Saint John of the Cross, Vaughan tells us that we behold the "final masterpiece" of Mysticism. Saint Theresa and Saint John have made Spanish Mysticism famous all the world over. These two feeble-bodied enthusiasts, working

together, are said by the best historians to have been powerful instruments in arresting the progress of Protestantism in Spain by causing their own small reformation to flourish within the Roman Church, and thus retaining there the vitality which would otherwise have expended itself outside, and would have given a result in Spain similar to that in Germany. As it was, Lutheranism took very little hold on the minds of the Spanish people.

Little Saint John of the Cross, or "Little Seneca," as Theresa sometimes called him, was the son of Gonzalo de Yepes, a Spaniard of fortune and family, who threw both away, to marry, when very young, a pretty but penniless girl named Catherine Alvarez. His family were so indignant with him for contracting this *mésalliance*, that they refused to give him any pecuniary aid, and he was obliged to support his little family by laboring as a common peasant in the field. Three sons were the fruit of this romantic union. The eldest, Louis, died young, the second, Francis, was distinguished for his piety; and the third, John,

became the greatest of the Spanish Mystics, famed all the world over for his devotion to the Roman Church. The future saint was scarcely more than an infant when his father died, leaving the pretty young mother to carry the burden of her family. She was fortunate enough to interest a wealthy nobleman of Toledo in the future saint, and he, at his own expense, educated the boy at a college at Salamanca.

Spanish historians tell us that from his earliest youth John was honored by special marks of approbation from the Virgin Mary; and that he also took a high rank as a student, and soon made up his mind to devote his life to religion. When Theresa first met the man who was to be of so much help to her in her work, he was a pale-faced, slightly built young monk of twenty-five years. He is described even at this early age as having more soul than body, and what little physical strength the Lord had given him he did his best to destroy by extravagant fasting. The name of John of the Cross was given him on account of his insatiable passion for suffering. One writer calls him "a Syba-

rite of asceticism," and tells us that "he took an epicurean delight in penance." He filled his cell — too low to permit the occupant to stand erect — with crosses and death's-heads; and it was his constant prayer that not a day of his life might pass in which he did not suffer something. Again and again did he, in his last years, exhort the monks under him, saying, "Whatsoever you find pleasant to soul or body, abandon! whatsoever is painful, embrace it!" Indeed the whole life of Saint John of the Cross was a practical attempt to carry out this frightful theory. He pursued it relentlessly, even to the end. In his last illness he needed to be removed, and he was told to choose between two places. At one of them his deadly enemy was prior; he therefore bade his friends carry him there, because he would have most to suffer.

While banished to the little convent of Peguela, Saint John of the Cross busied himself completing his famous Mystical treatise called "The Obscure Night, and the Ascent of Mount Carmel." Much of this book is absolutely un-

intelligible to modern readers, but it breathes a spirit of high and pure devotion to God and Christ.

Saint John of the Cross is a character who calls forth our deepest admiration; he had a lofty, poetic nature, a consecrated moral purpose, and an enthusiasm for the ascetic life. He was far from being a vision-craving sentimentalist; although perhaps the Germans would call him a "God-intoxicated" man. His religious feelings, when they found expression in words, became open to the criticism of being obscure and incomprehensible; he saw and felt infinitely more than he had the power to convey to others. In vain does he try to divide his great work on Mysticism into logical heads; it still remains to most readers "a strange mixture of love and logic, tears and tropes." Extravagant as were many of Saint John's theories and practices, he still stands out in our minds as a character who is worthy of our profoundest reverence; for his faith never faltered, and he pursued to the end the course his conscience pointed out to him. This single-minded

ascetic held as the first principle of his religious philosophy that only through bodily suffering and sacrifice could man find and enjoy God.

> "Burn, burn, O Love, within my heart, —
> Burn fiercely night and day,
> Till all the dross of earthly love
> Is burned and burned away."

This saint, whose only joy was pain, is one of the most picturesque figures of the sixteenth century. He was a pure idealist, and apparently he lived up to his ideals. However mistaken his theory of life may have been, however narrow and irrational, he yet lived up to it with unswerving consistency; and such consistency is too rare and too precious a jewel to be lightly valued in any age.

Theresa was fifty-two years old when she first met this young zealot; and they became kindred spirits at once. Indeed, Saint John promised to be the first to enter the Reformed monastery for friars, if Theresa would not keep him waiting too long.

CHAPTER XI.

DURVELO. — VALLADOLID.

WE left Theresa on the eve of starting for Durvelo. She took with her Antonia and the good priest Julian of Avila. Her own account of this journey is worth translating: —

"We set out early in the morning; but as we did not know the road, we missed it, and the place being but little known, we could not hear much about it. We spent the day in great toil, for the sun was very strong; when we thought we were near the place, we had to go as far again. I shall always remember that wearisome and winding road! We reached the house a little before nightfall, and the state it was in when we entered was such that we could not venture to pass the night there, because of the exceeding absence of cleanliness. It had a fair porch, two rooms, one beyond the other, and a garret, with a small kitchen. This was the whole building which was to be our monastery. I thought that the porch might be made into

a church, the garret into a choir, which would do well, and the friars could sleep in the room. The nun who was with me, although much better than I am and much more given to penance, could not bear to think of having a monastery there; she said to me, 'Certainly, mother, there is nobody, however great his spirituality, who can bear this.' The father who was travelling with me said he would live not only there, but in a pigsty, and John of the Cross, who had joined the party, was of the same mind."

After deciding reluctantly to use this wretched building for a monastery as soon as funds were obtained for remodelling it, Theresa set out for Valladolid, intending to found there still another convent. She took with her John of the Cross, that she might give him all the instruction in her power concerning the Primitive Rule as practised in the new convents of the Reform.

"He had the means," Theresa writes, "because he would not keep enclosure for several days in the new house, of learning our way of life so that he might clearly understand everything, both the mortification we practise and the sisterly affection with which we treat one another."

A few months passed, before the monastery in Durvelo was ready for occupancy. Father Antonio wrote favorably of his great success in begging for the foundation; thus were great expectations raised; but when asked to give an account of the result of his begging, his only acquisitions were found to be "five hour-glasses." He said he was most anxious that the community should be punctual, and did not seem to have thought it necessary for them to have anything to sit or sleep upon. Want of money delayed this foundation for several months; but finally, in Advent, Saint John of the Cross and Father Antonio began their lonely, austere life together. At first they had but two companions; and one of these was an old priest who was unable from infirmity to keep the Rule, while the other proved inconstant to his vows and went back to the Mitigated Rule. It was then that Father Antonio took the name of Antonio of Jesus, and Saint John adopted the suffix of the Cross, by which he is always known. Theresa writes much in her letters about the ascetic, barren life led by these two holy friars.

The little church had no decorations whatsoever. Each friar had a stone in his cell for a pillow, and each went out daily, in all weathers, walking two leagues barefooted, to preach in a neighboring hamlet.

While the two devout fathers were settling themselves in Durvelo, Theresa remained in Valladolid. The new convent there proved to be extremely unhealthy, and all the nuns fell ill. Then a noble lady in the neighborhood offered to exchange houses, and provide the new community with a better convent. It took some time to put these quarters in order, and Theresa remained with the sisters until the exchange was fairly made.

We have several interesting letters of Theresa written to her old friend in Avila, Don Francisco de Salcedo, during this prolonged stay in Valladolid. He seems to have been in the habit of sending fruit and vegetables to the inmates of St. Joseph's, and she thanks him quaintly, saying: —

"I think it no little thing, the six ducats that you say that you would give to come and see me. I think

it a great deal. But then, what would I not give to have the pleasure of seeing you? In sooth, you are worth more than I am? What is a poor nun who owns nothing? Of what importance is she? A gentleman who sends us delicious drinks and dainties, who can also give us radishes and lettuce, and when he brings us apples, will employ no other servant but himself, ought to be held in somewhat higher estimation. Speaking of drinks, they say that there is a delicious one to be had here; but Don Francisco de Salcedo not being at hand, we know nothing of its taste, and are without hope of knowing it."

This letter of Theresa has a pleasant "carnal" flavor, which makes our saint seem agreeably human. We are glad to be able to think of the white-robed sisters of St. Joseph's as sometimes indulging themselves in material pleasures. What were the dainty drinks and cooling cups prepared by the faithful Spanish cavalier for these pious nuns? And at the ringing of which bell were the members of the community permitted solemnly to treat themselves to these innocent luxuries? It is such questions as these for which we vainly seek answers in the voluminous manuscript of Saint Theresa's life.

Pious hands have conscientiously excerpted many of the human touches we in this impious age would so much enjoy reading. It is only here and there, scattered through Theresa's letters, that we find evidences to indicate that the woman was never wholly lost in the saint.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRINCESS EBOLI.

AFTER the two new foundations described in the last chapter, the Princess of Eboli sent for Theresa to come to Pastrana. There she was received by the princess and her husband with great affection and respect. They at once assigned her a large apartment in their palace. The princess had sent for Theresa because she wished her to start a convent of the Reformed order in Pastrana; but her desire proved to be only the whim of an idle woman. Convents of the Reformed order became the fashion for a time, and Theresa suffered much at the hands of silly women who had no sincere interest in the new work, and took it up for a momentary diversion.

The princess, who was wont to have her own way about everything, wished Theresa to change

her rules to suit her good pleasure; and when Theresa refused to do this, she acted like a spoiled child. At one time she determined to read the manuscript containing the account of Theresa's life. Theresa at first refused to show it to her; and finally, after the princess had teased her into lending it to her husband and herself, she proceeded to make every sort of fun of it, and read aloud extracts to any and every one she met. We can imagine how annoyed Theresa must have been by this and similar other petty persecutions. Nor was this the end; for — whether from accident or design it is not known — in some way through the Princess Eboli, Theresa's manuscript was sent to the Inquisition to be examined. Although the saint's Life was returned by the officers of this horrible institution and approved, yet the mere fact of the examination both mortified and alarmed Theresa.

This same wayward princess caused the order still more trouble a few years later, when she was left a widow. Directly after her husband's death she made up her mind to become a nun.

She put on the Carmelite dress by the side of her husband's body, and immediately sent word to the sisters at Pastrana to expect her, and prepare a cell for her. The good prioress was dismayed; there was nothing for her to do, however, but yield to the request of the foundress of the convent. No sooner had the wayward princess become an inmate, than she began to make rules for herself, and refused to obey the Primitive Rule. She insisted on receiving visitors at the *grille* of the chapel, in eating what she pleased, and in misconducting herself generally. Theresa wrote reproving her, and then the princess went outside and lived in a small hermitage. At last, weary of playing nun, she returned to her own palace, stopped the income she had promised the convent, and obliged the convent and church to be closed. This is only one of the various obstacles which Theresa met while engaged in her Reform. She was dependent on the bounty of the rich for the incomes of her foundations; and too often her wealthy benefactors chose to be unreasonable in the demands they made upon her.

From Pastrana, Theresa went to Salamanca, to continue there her work of founding religious houses, and found that the structure given for the new convent in this place had been occupied for several years by students belonging to a neighboring university. It was a large, rambling house, but had been left in a filthy condition by these Spanish students. The first night Theresa spent in this building was anything but agreeable, and her companion was in terror all night lest some of the students should have concealed themselves in the house. This experience of Theresa she describes graphically in a letter written to her spiritual children in Avila: —

"I have to tell you one thing, my sisters, at which I am ready to laugh when I remember it, — the fears of my companion Mary, a nun older than myself. She could not get the students out of her thoughts, thinking that as they were so annoyed at having to quit the house, some of them might be still hiding in it. They could very easily do it, for there was room enough. We shut ourselves up in a room where there was plenty of straw. That night we slept on this straw, covered by two blankets that had been lent us. When Sister Mary found herself shut up in our room, she

seemed more at ease about the students, though she did nothing but look about her, first on one side, and then on the other; she was afraid, and Satan must have helped her to imagine dangers for the purpose of troubling me, for, owing to the weakness of the heart, which I suffer, very little is enough to do it. I asked her what she was looking about for. She replied, 'Mother, I was thinking if I were to die now, what would you do all alone.' I thought it would be a disagreeable thing, if it happened. It made me dwell on it for a moment, and even to be afraid; for though I am not afraid of dead bodies, they always cause me a certain faintness even when I am not alone. I answered her, 'Sister, when that shall happen, I shall consider what I shall do; now, let me go to sleep.'"

What a strange picture this letter presents to us, — an empty house, wholly out of repair, lately occupied by a group of Spanish students who had left it redolent of the fumes of their filthy orgies, a bare cold room with a pallet of straw, on which lay these two lonely, nervous women! But this letter reveals to us painfully Theresa's self-absorption, which must have made her at times a trying travelling companion. From the expressions of childish

timidity uttered by both sisters, it is easy to see that neither woman was as yet freed from all traces of selfishness.

It is interesting to think of the little group of faithful souls in Avila as they read their "Mother's" letters. What a sensation these breezy epistles must have created in that quiet convent; and what a contrast Theresa's adventurous experiences must have been to the studied monotony of their life! These letters doubtless furnished food for reflection for many a long, quiet hour.

The next one of Theresa's foundations was at Alba de Tormes; this was accomplished quickly, and she hurried from there to Medina, where some trouble had arisen about the election of a new prioress. Father Angelo, the Provincial, was at this time a little displeased at Theresa's interference, for she had her own views on the subject of the choice of prioress for the new convent, and did not always listen patiently to advice from her superiors.

The apostolic visitor of the order of Mount Carmel was then in Spain, and had become

much interested in Theresa and her work. While in Avila, he had visited the large Convent of the Incarnation, and found it in a deplorable condition. No discipline whatsoever was maintained, and many of the inmates spent all their time paying visits outside the convent. When the apostolic visitor, Father Hernandez, found that in the great Convent of the Incarnation affairs were in a wretched state of disorder, while in the Convent of St. Joseph's everything was running smoothly, he thought he could do nothing wiser than to appoint Theresa prioress of the Incarnation, hoping that she might be able to remodel its constitution, and bring order out of the confusion and anarchy he had found there. The number of inmates in the older convent had fallen off considerably at this date, and those who remained frequently asked permission to reside with their families. Indeed, the extreme poverty of the sisters, owing to the waste which had so long been carried on there, made it nearly impossible to provide them with the necessaries of life; even the regular religious observances

were often omitted because there was no one who had any authority over the nuns.

When Theresa heard that Father Hernandez had appointed her prioress of the Incarnation, she was made very unhappy. No one knew better than herself the wretched condition of affairs temporal and spiritual in this convent; and she knew also how strongly many of the inmates would oppose her nomination. Her migration to the Convent of St. Joseph's had been a tacit reproach to the sisters of the Incarnation, and they were unreasonably opposed to all the regulations of the Reformed Rule. The task, then, of taking hold of this convent and trying to improve its condition was an exceedingly unpleasant one to Theresa. But she was wise enough to foresee its difficulties, and not to be surprised by the storm which created the news of her nomination.

In the first place, the nuns resented the interference of the apostolic visitor, and claimed the right of electing their own superior; in the second place, they were determined to guard

all the liberties which little by little they had managed to gain.

When the day arrived for Theresa to be installed, — for she was obliged to accept an appointment made by the apostolic visitor, — Father Angelo accompanied her to the convent. All the religious were assembled in the choir; and when the act of the visitor was read to them, it was evident, from the noise which at once arose, that they had arranged a concerted course of action. A number stood up to protest, and abused Theresa with unseemly violence. They declared that they would not accept any superior whom they had not themselves chosen, and that they never would give up the right of choice. The provincial, amazed to find himself treated with so much disrespect, became angry, and threatened never to enter the convent again; several of the sisters screamed and fainted, and the whole scene was one of disgraceful noise and confusion. One or two of the sisters professed to be friendly to Theresa; but by far the larger part of them showed open signs of rebellion. The Provincial insisted, however,

that the new prioress should be installed, and then went away, leaving her to pour oil on the troubled waters as best she might.

This was a disheartening position for Theresa to find herself in; and the time had now come for her to exercise all her tact and worldly wisdom. How would she ever be able to make her new charges love her? And what a wretched life she was likely to lead in the Incarnation unless she could in some way make the sisters give up their prejudice against her authority!

On the first chapter-day it was expected that the new prioress would demand explanation and apologies from the unruly sisters; so all came, in sullen fear, to report themselves. But what was their surprise, when they entered the lower choir, to find the stall usually filled by the prioress now occupied by a beautiful statue of the Virgin Mary. At the feet of this statue, in a most humble attitude, sat their superior, who, when all the sisters had assembled, read them a most touching address. In this address she did not complain of their treatment towards her in any way, and she made no claims to be

worthy of their respect. She did not even force upon them any new rules; she simply told them that she loved them, and would do her best to make them happy.

All hearts were gained by this masterly stroke of tact. Angry feelings were subdued, and even the leaders of the revolt had nothing to say against Theresa's opening address. But what a delicate task Theresa still had before her! Every one of her movements was watched with suspicion, and she was surrounded by women who already disliked her, and would take offence at the first exercise of her authority. One of the many bad habits contracted by the nuns was that of receiving "indiscriminate visits in the parlor from gentlemen of the town." This pleasure the sisters were determined not to give up, and the gentlemen from Avila were equally determined not to discontinue. One of these gentlemen Theresa sent away more than once, but he persisted pressing his attentions. Finally, he met Theresa in the parlor and addressed her in terms of great insolence. The new prioress listened to him

silently, but in some way made him feel that "Mother Theresa was not to be trifled with;" for after this interview he never appeared again.

Little by little, Theresa made changes for the better in the regulations of the convent. She tried a system of rewards, and sometimes succeeded in winning the affection of the sisters by conferring on them temporal favors. When she began her work in the convent, she found that many of the nuns were dressed in rags, and had almost no underclothes. Theresa succeeded, however, in soliciting money from outside friends, and by prudence and economy within the convent was soon enabled to supply one with a habit, another with a tunic, and all with an ample amount of the necessaries of life. All the tact and business sagacity in the world would have availed nothing in the situation in which Theresa now found herself, without the charm of her own presence. Even when she was an unattractive middle-aged woman, all succumbed to the rare fascination of her personal influence. It was felt over the whole convent. Wonder of wonders,

she succeeded in making the hours of recreation interesting, without introducing gentleman visitors, without permitting secular music, and without allowing silly novels to be read!

First, the wise prioress won the confidence of the nuns individually by visiting them frequently in their cells and making them feel her affection for them; then it was a simple matter to get their collective consent to her new measures.

Among the many changes introduced by Theresa was a change of confessors. It was through her advice that Saint John of the Cross came for a time to the convent and built himself a little hermitage in the garden of the Incarnation. Here he led the same lonely, austere life he had led in Durvelo, and only left his habitation to preach to or confess the nuns. His influence over the convent was wonderfully inspiring. We are told that he differed much from their former spiritual director, and also that he refused "to receive any presents, or have any favorites among the nuns."

The Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation had been in the habit of receiving young girls

as pupils. The question arose, while Theresa was prioress, as to whether this custom should continue. At this time Theresa evidently disapproved it; for she writes to one of the provincials: "I tell your honor that so many girls and so much clatter is by no means well."

As we study the prioress Theresa, we are more and more impressed by her practical wisdom and common-sense. She examined each situation which arose in the convent life, and chose, after much forethought, the very best course of action. This, for a woman of her impressionable, emotional temperament, was remarkable; for executive ability is very rarely found united with a "genius for religion." Worldliness and Other-worldliness are scarcely ever combined in one nature.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERESA PRIORESS OF THE INCARNATION.

THERESA remained prioress of the Incarnation nearly two years. Under her rule the sisters turned from their worldly amusements and devoted themselves anew to God. They all learned to love their new prioress, and "if it had depended on them, they never would have suffered themselves to be separated from her." We find recorded: "She displayed a masculine prudence, foreseeing all things, and regulating all things seasonably; for she governed in such a manner that she by no means compelled souls, but led them most gently whither she would; since by the gentleness of her manners, the grace of her actions, the charm of her conversation, she made herself so lovely to all that she ruled first minds, then bodies, with most pleasant sway. She studied the

characters of all, and suited herself to all in a manner certainly wonderful, and displayed a gravity combined with affability, so that she was equally loved and honored by all; which is to be reckoned as a proof of the highest wisdom."

Much of Theresa's time while at the Incarnation was spent in correspondence concerning her different foundations. She kept constantly in mind the sisters of St. Joseph's, and cared for all its concerns as faithfully as if she had been living there. The sisters wrote to her of all their joys and sorrows, and depended on her for sympathy and advice.

In July, 1573, Hernandez ordered the prioress of the Incarnation to go to Salamanca, where the nuns were ill, owing to the unhealthy condition of their house. By this time, Theresa had become an authority in practical matters. She was accompanied on this journey by Julian of Avila, and writes: "I looked at the house, that I might be able to say what should be done to it; for experience had taught me much in these matters." The house proved to be unfit to

use; so Theresa bought a new one, and had a stormy discussion with the landlord of the old one, who was "exceedingly out of temper" at losing his tenants. The unavoidable delays which occurred during the moving of the Salamanca convent detained Theresa there several months. The sisters themselves were so ill and weak that they could not take any responsibility.

About this time the apostolical visitor began to object to any more new foundations. It was comparatively easy to begin a new convent, but difficult to keep up the nuns' enthusiasm, and to get enough money to provide for their food and clothing. So Hernandez wrote to Theresa at Salamanca, telling her to make no more foundations at present. But her heart was set upon making a new foundation in the city of Segovia. The bishop had consented, and Theresa thought the opportunity one which should not be neglected. The visitor reluctantly granted permission; and a noble lady of the town, Doña Anna de Ximena, took the house and provided all necessaries both for the church and the nuns, taking the habit herself, with her daughter, and

thus giving Theresa "very little trouble in the matter." There was still opposition, however, to this foundation. The vicar-general, when he heard that a monastery had been founded, came at once in great wrath, refused to allow Mass to be said in it, and he sought to imprison Saint John of the Cross for aiding Saint Theresa. But in spite of these difficulties, the monastery of Segovia was opened March 19, 1574. The vicar-general would not leave the church without placing a constable at the door, and a new hue and cry was raised against the Reform. After a few weeks this was quieted, and the nuns were left alone, with half a dozen lawsuits on their hands. Theresa writes: "We had one already with the Franciscan friars; about another house we had to go to law with the friars of the order for the Ransom of Captives, and with the chapter also. O Jesus, what it is to have to contend against many minds!" The first serious opposition which arose against the Reform began at this time, and lasted through many years. A lady from Veas, together with the parish priest and

several other persons, wrote Theresa, asking her to go to that place and found a monastery. Theresa wrote to Hernandez, who replied that he did not wish her to give pain to the friends of the new order by refusing, but that he was quite sure a foundation at Veas would not be successful. Theresa had already become interested in the foundress of the new convent, and was not to be easily discouraged from carrying out her plan. The name of the lady from Veas was Doña Catalena Godinez. She was the daughter of noble parents, and until the age of fourteen had been very far from contemplating a cloistered life. She was distinguished for her pride, and had rejected several offers of marriage as unworthy of her, saying disdainfully, "How little satisfies my father, provided I marry an eldest son! I intend that my family shall have its beginning in me." But in spite of her ambition, Doña Catalena dreaded marriage, even with a partner who should meet all her requirements in family and fortune. Several times she said that she thought it "a meanness to be subject to

any one." At last, she became seriously ill, and on her recovery was seized with a desire to found a convent. She had plenty of money; so that if she could only gain her parents' consent, her plan could easily be carried out. But her parents at first refused to consider the proposition as a serious one. She then spent three years besieging them for their consent, even disfiguring her face so that she might not be attractive to her suitors. All this time she practised every sort of severe penance, wearing her father's coat-of-mail next her flesh the whole of Lent. At last her health gave way, and she suffered everything from the hands of ignorant physicians. "In eight years she was bled more than five hundred times, and cupped so often that the marks were always seen on her flesh. Sometimes salt was applied, because one of the physicians told her that this remedy was good for drawing out the poisonous humors which caused the pain in her side." Finally, one evening, Doña Catalena went to bed desiring to discover the most perfect religious order on earth, in order that she might enter

it. She dreamed that she was walking along a very narrow path, in the greatest peril from deep precipices which lay on each side of her, when she met a person in the dress of a Discalced friar, who spoke to her, saying, "Sister, come with me." He took her to a convent in which were many nuns; and when she saw no light except that which came from the candles in their hands, she inquired to what order they belonged. All were silent; but lifting their veils, they smiled and showed her their happy countenances. The prioress took her by the hand, and said, "My child, I wish you to be here," and at the same time showed her the Rule and Constitution. For years after Catalena had received this vision she sought to find a religious order that should be like the one that had been revealed to her. At last, a Jesuit father told her that the vision she had received had reference to the new Carmelite Reformed order; and then Doña Catalena wrote to Theresa at once. Undoubtedly Theresa's high-strung, imaginative nature found much to sympathize with in this girl's romantic experiences.

At her request, she went to Veas directly, and there, while busy with the new foundation, she became acquainted with Jerome Gratian, who was to have a great influence over the Reform.

Jerome Gratian was the son of Don Diego Gracian de Alderete, who had been secretary, first to Charles V., and then to Philip II. Of his mother, Theresa writes: "I have known few women equal to her in excellence." Jerome had been educated by the Jesuits, and had hesitated for some time between joining their society and that of the Reformed Carmelites. He had at first feared the austerities of the Reformed Carmelite order; but after visiting one or two of their convents, and "beholding so much devotion and good-will in the service of our Lord," he determined to cast in his lot with them. Father Gratian was a man of courage and great practical sagacity, but he was without the spirituality of Saint John of the Cross. He was handsome, had much tact, and a remarkable gift for organization. Probably the ultimate success of the Reform was due in large part to his having these talents,

and to Theresa's perspicacity in recognizing them.

In March, 1573, Father Gratian "professed," and although then only thirty years old, he was appointed visitor of Andalusia. Theresa writes in her customary enthusiastic way to the prioress of Medina regarding her first acquaintance with him: "How I have desired that you should be with me these days! Know that in my opinion, without exaggeration, they have been the best of my life! The father, Master Gratian, has been here these twenty days. I tell you that although I have seen so much of him, I do not yet understand fully the value of this man. In my eyes, he is perfect. Such perfection, with so much sweetness, I have never seen. . . . He has a pleasing address; so much so that those who converse with him come to love him at first sight." Theresa wrote to another friend, "It is a great joy to me to see so good a man as he is."

We find a few very great characters complete in themselves and acting independently of external influences; but the great majority of

the human race are made or marred by those whose conduct and talents they admire and reverence. Theresa's character was not a self-reliant one. Strong as she appeared to her weaker sisters, she was ready to vibrate responsively at the most delicate touch of those she came to love and trust. For a time, Father Gratian was her confessor, and she gladly subjected herself to his guidance. Later, she learned by experience that he was not to be trusted implicitly in all things, and then in her turn she became his staff and guide. When she first knew him, however, his will was law.

Serious troubles between the friars of the Mitigated rule and the Reformed Carmelites had already begun. Disputes had arisen, and the Mitigated friars, alarmed at the rapid growth of the new reform, had even gone so far as to carry the discussion between the two orders to Rome itself.

Petty jealousies between religious orders were as common in those days as are petty jealousies between rival sects to-day. The different monastic orders were all ambitious and selfish,

working for the glory of the particular part of God's kingdom to which they belonged, rather than for the grander aim, "Peace on earth, good will to men." Theresa, disturbed at the arbitrary conduct of the Mitigated order, sent two friars to represent her side of the cause in Rome, while Father Gratian, with some companions, started for Madrid to consult the king. Saint John of the Cross, who was sent on another important mission, was seized by the Mitigated friars and imprisoned in Toledo; and a few months later, a brief arrived, ordering Theresa to retire there, and subjecting the entire reform to the Mitigated rule. This was a crushing blow. Even Gratian announced that "all was over;" for to have the Mitigated Carmelites given power to control the affairs of the Reformed orders was virtually to condemn the Reform to oblivion.

The day the bad news came, Theresa was so overcome by hearing it that she refused to eat anything for twenty-four hours. At last, Anne of St. Bartholomew persuaded her to enter the refectory, and then, according to a

legend, "the Lord appeared to both sisters, comforting and encouraging them, even breaking off bits of bread and feeding them with his own hands."

"I considered myself the cause of the whole tempest," Theresa wrote afterwards; "and if they had thrown me into the sea with Jonah, the storm would have ceased." The morning after the discouraging news had arrived, Theresa wrote to the king. Her letter is dated July 19, 1575: —

"I have lived for forty years in this order, and, reviewing all things, I clearly perceive that unless the Discalced soon have a provincial of their own, great injury will arise, nor will it be possible for the reform to last. Therefore, because the power of accomplishing this lies with your Majesty, whom I perceive to be given by the Blessed Virgin as a protector of our order, I have taken upon myself humbly to request the same from your Majesty for the love of God and of His Glorious Mother."

Soon after writing this letter, Theresa started for Seville, accompanied by six companions, besides Julian of Avila, and Antony Gaytan.

This journey was full of disasters. Theresa was attacked with a violent fever, which was aggravated by the intense heat, and the whole party narrowly escaped drowning in crossing a river. They desired to reach Cordova early in the morning, to hear Mass quietly; but when they arrived, they found the church crowded, as it was a local feast-day. Theresa writes: —

"We alighted near the church, and though none could see our faces, our veils being down, the sight of these veils, together with our sandals and white mantles, was enough to cause curiosity and emotion among all. What I tell you, daughters, may seem to you a mere trifle, but to me it was one of the severest mortifications of my life; for the excitement of the people at the sight of us was no less than if we had been so many bulls driven in for a bull-fight."

In Spain, a country filled at this period with enthusiastic Catholics, there were plenty of powerful people who knew the degraded condition into which many of the old religious orders had declined. It was an open secret that the inmates of these convents were concealing every kind of vice under their religious cloaks. The

generals of these lay orders had become less and less strict; and the superiors were often chosen because of their good-natured indifference to the conduct and character of the institutions. Reformers of these corrupt convents were therefore looked upon with favor by the Catholic laity, though they were always violently opposed by the self-indulgent clergy.

The hollow-eyed, malignant bigot, Philip II., was not at first inclined to give his approval to the institutions of the Reformed Carmelites. The word "reform" had come to be associated with the "Lutheran pest" in his narrow mind; and he dreaded lest that contagious disease should take permanent hold in Spain. It was only by keeping the terrors of the Inquisition and the *autos-da-fé* perpetually before the people, that he succeeded in killing the seeds which the great German heretic had sown so widely abroad. But Theresa's humble obedience to the Roman Church, and her growing reputation for sanctity, added greatly to the influence of her letters on the king. After considerable delay, in which Philip consulted the officers of

the Inquisition, the king finally declared that the Reform of Saint Theresa should be maintained, and that the Discalced and Mitigated should be permitted to live separately, and to be governed by superiors of their own choosing. This last favor was one which Theresa had been trying to gain for several years, and great was her joy at the triumph of her cause. The long dispute between the two orders was ended, and the reformers could now go on with their work in peace.

CHAPTER XIV.

REBELLIOUS NUNS.

DURING the stormy period of the reform recorded in the last chapter, the new monasteries had been left without much oversight, and Theresa found them in great need of supervision. Saint John of the Cross, we remember, was imprisoned in a Mitigated Carmelite monastery in Toledo, while Gratian was deprived of all his power for months. Saint John was confined in a very small cell, the door of which was kept locked. He suffered fearfully from the heat and bad air, and seemed to be gradually dying; but nothing moved his superiors to release him. One day he examined a window in the corridor, and a few nights later, finding his door left unlocked by accident, tore the coverlet of his bed into strips, and thus making a rope, succeeded in letting himself down, and in

time found refuge in a Discalced convent of nuns, where he remained in concealment until the troubles between the rival orders ceased. It is said that a brilliant and marvellous light guided him to this place of safety.

No sooner had the persecutions from without ceased, than the reformers were obliged to turn their attention to troubles within the new convents. Alas! the Perfect Rule had failed in maintaining the conduct of all the new convents at the desired level. The convent in Seville had been founded in the midst of serious difficulties; and after Theresa had left it in May, 1575, a young and inexperienced confessor had been allowed to hear the confessions of the sisters. This had led to serious troubles; for the young man, — to put the mildest interpretation upon his conduct, — had been exceedingly imprudent. His name was Garcia Alvarez, and he became very intimate with the young novices, spending several hours daily in hearing their confessions and conversing in the confessional. These prolonged *tête-à-tête* confessional flirtations were always disapproved by Theresa. Her wisdom and

practical experience had taught her the unhealthy fascination of this kind of intercourse, and in arranging the constitution for the Reformed orders she had done her best to guard against it.

The prioress at Seville also knew the dangerous tendencies of these long talks between the young novices and the young priest. After repeated reproofs to Garcia Alvarez she finally interfered, and had the youthful confessor dismissed. At this the sisters, who were devoted to their confessor, were furious with the prioress, and spread all sorts of scandalous stories about her through the entire town. Some enemies of the Reform had the young man reinstated and the prioress herself deposed, putting a young and giddy nun in her place. The result of this act was to make the convent a perfect nest of scandal and dissensions.

The chief cause of all this trouble was a gay, light-headed nun named Beatrix. Her personal attractions must have been great, as Father Gratian, who had himself directed her to the order, frankly confessed that he heard her con-

fessions with difficulty, "on account of her youth and beauty." Theresa implied that she had better be labelled "Dangerous," and wrote to Father Gratian "to take care about her."

The tumult in this convent was finally quelled, and Theresa appointed Isabella of St. Jerome prioress. Beatrix was considered to be under the immediate influence of the Devil, and therefore irresponsible for her persistent bad conduct. Nowhere does Theresa show more evidence of her wisdom and tact than in the advice she gave the young sisters at Seville, after this trouble. She told them "not to speak among themselves much of what has passed, as it can be of no advantage, and may do great harm." The whole affair was disgraceful, and of course did the Reform an injury. Beatrix was carefully watched for fear she should run away from the convent, and an older and wiser confessor was in future given the care of the young novice's spiritual health.

About the time of these internal and external annoyances, Theresa heard that her brother Lorenzo was on his way home from the New

World. His wife had died there, and he returned with three children. One of them, the pretty little Teresita, became her aunt Theresa's particular pet and darling. At the early age of twelve the child expressed a desire to become a Carmelite, and there are frequent references to her as "a little angel," in her aunt's letters.

During the last years of Theresa's life her correspondence was voluminous. She complains of it to Gratian, saying, "It is killing me." Her letters to her brother Lorenzo are gay and familiar, full of flashes of wit and daring sallies of humor. At one time she sends Lorenzo a hair shirt, and begs him not to wear it more than once a week, and to take it off when it brings blood. Then she adds, "Do not forget to write and tell me how you get on with this little plaything." Lorenzo sends his sister money, bonbons, and presents. It diverts Theresa that she should return his kindness by sending him instruments of penance. Little Teresita, with the childish instinct of imitation, also demands some instruments of torture, and her aunt sends the little girl a discipline and a small-sized hair shirt

too. To play at being a nun was quite as fascinating to a child who lived in the sixteenth century, as to play at being any other kind of a "grown-up lady;" but there is something at once pathetic and revolting in thinking of the little Teresita amusing herself innocently with a hair shirt before she had even tasted the natural pleasures of youth.

There still exist many letters of Theresa, written at this time to the prioresses of the various convents. In one of these convents a new kind of mortification had been introduced. This consisted in the superior's giving an order to one nun to give a sudden buffet — or slap in the face — to another. Theresa did not approve of this proceeding, and wrote that the nuns were not to be treated in such a manner. "They are not slaves, and mortification is only to serve for advancement in good."

Another complaint Theresa makes is against "learned nuns." "Heaven preserve my nuns from being Latinists," she writes. It was her disapproval of learning which kept her Mysticism and her projects for reform within the narrow

borders of the Roman Church. Obedience to the Church she urged as the first duty of a Catholic. She never countenanced any claim to the right of private judgment.

Some amusing passages in Theresa's letters relate to the characters of Teresita and Isabella, a younger sister of Gratian. Mary of St. Joseph's wrote to her comparing the two children. Theresa replied that if Isabella had the natural graces of Teresita, they might expect great things of her. "The girl has some poor little images of shepherds and nuns, and one of Our Lady, and not a feast-day comes but she invents something pretty for recreation. She makes verses, too, and sings them nicely." One defect which Theresa notes in her niece is "a bad, lumpish mouth," and yet she says that she was "always laughing." "To be sure it's not her fault, but her mouth's," she writes. We see from this that Theresa disliked the sisters to have any physical defects. If possible, she wished them to be perfect specimens of womanhood.

In choosing new novices, Theresa was always careful to choose girls who were well and strong,

and of cheerful, sanguine temperaments. She wrote facetiously to one of the friars who had recommended two novices to her from seeing them only once. "So you think you could tell these young persons had vocations by merely looking at their faces! . . . We are not so easy to know; and many have heard the confessions of women for years and never known their characters at all, because they have only what they have told of themselves in confession to judge from."

Soon after the scandalous conduct of Beatrix in the Seville convent, Theresa is said to have received a celebrated revelation, or charter, for the use of her Reformed convents. According to the credulous spirit of the age, this charter was thought to be the result of a supernatural revelation; but from our study of the document we see no evidence to cause us to believe that it did not come directly from the brain of the clear-headed woman who had given so much of her best thought to furthering the interests of the Reform. In the sixteenth century, however, a woman's word stood for little unless it claimed

to be guided by Deity. Now undoubtedly Theresa's life was directed by God, and her highest thoughts came to her from Him, — but through natural, we should say, and not supernatural channels. Those who live in this nineteenth century have learned to regard human souls as holding within themselves limitless possibilities. In some mysterious way through them God speaks now, and spoke in Theresa's time as well. That the imaginative Spaniards chose to materialize His "still small voice" ought not to surprise us; for we must constantly recall the fact that the whole Spanish mind stood in an attitude of expectancy towards the Heavenly Powers.

The rules said to have been revealed to Theresa for the use of her convents were wonderfully practical, apparently the direct result of her own personal experience.

The first one was, that all superiors should be of one mind, and in harmony among themselves.

The second, that though they were to have many monasteries, the number of friars and nuns in the different monasteries should be very small.

The third, that they should converse as rarely as possible with secular persons, and then only for the good and salvation of their souls.

The fourth, that they should teach more by deeds than words. This teaching by deeds Theresa emphasized strongly. Occasionally, in looking over her letters to the different prioresses, we come across one or two sentences in which she shows some temper; but usually her own conduct is irreproachable. We quote from one severe letter written to Mary of St. Joseph's, who had declined to be reappointed to the office of prioress, from which she had been deposed: —

"Pray leave off these booby-bits of perfection! We have all been working for and desiring this, and here are you with all your nonsense, for it is nothing else. It is not alone your concern, but the concern of the whole order. If, then, God grant us this favor, hold your tongue and obey, or you will annoy me much."

After the unfortunate experience in Seville, Theresa was very careful not to allow much intercourse between the "nuns and clerics."

"I am very sure," she writes, "that even though they be saints, it is better in our convents to have little intercourse between them. Even if it be Paul himself (Gratian), it is better to have little of it except in the pulpit."

Theresa remained a long time in Seville, and there had little Teresita with her. The child became the "familiar spirit" of the convent, and Theresa writes: "There is something really angelic in her disposition; she enlivens our recreations by her wonderful tales of the Indians and the sea, and she tells them much better than I could do myself." It is pleasant to think of this pretty, vivacious child relieving the monotony of this rigid, gloomy convent life! When only twelve years old, Teresita put on the white Carmelite gown and veil; and what a picture she must have made running about the bare convent rooms! She was so much beloved by all the sisters in every convent where she stayed, that we find Theresa altering her mind about the habit of admitting young girls. "I tell you that these little angels edify us and give us recreation, and I see no

inconvenience, but the reverse, in our having one in every house."

Among the many amusing customs which we find noted in the old monastic records is the habit the sisters had of signing themselves by extraordinary pseudonyms. For instance, Sister Jeronina, in writing to Theresa, signs herself "Dunghill." Theresa answers that she hopes her humility is not all in word.

A festival was usually made of the day when a new prioress was elected; and we find Theresa complaining in one letter that "she had no carols sent her on the occasion of one of the elections at Seville." She likes the nuns, she writes, "to have a moderate amount of fun at such a time." The first few years after the troubles between the two orders were settled, very few new convents were founded; but Theresa found enough to do travelling from one convent to another, pointing out defects in their management, or suggesting improvements in their methods of daily living. Several letters came from a small place called Villanueva de la Jara, begging Theresa to

start a new convent there; but she refused at first to attempt the work, knowing that the place was small and the house for the convent worth very little. She understood, too, that the women who wished to found the new convent had already been living together many years, and would therefore form a majority of the inmates. Theresa feared that with the best intentions in the world these women might be difficult to train in new ways. There were seven of them who had been living together for years, and now the whole population desired that a Carmelite convent should be founded in the hermitage beside which they lived. For a long time Theresa hesitated to grant their request. "It seemed to her too much like sewing a piece of new cloth on an old garment;" but at last, after receiving many urgent appeals, she started for Villanueva, accompanied by two nuns from the convent in Toledo and two from Malagon. The journey was made in pleasant weather, and Theresa's own health was unusually good. The whole population of the little town turned out to meet her. "When we were yet far away,

we heard the ringing of bells, and on our entering the church they began the Te Deum. That done, they carried the Holy Sacrament on a bier, and on another, Our Lady, with crosses and banners. The procession moved on with great pomp; we in our white mantles, and faces veiled, in the midst." After this complimentary welcome, Theresa and her four companions sought out the hermitage, and the seven patient nuns who had so long been waiting for them.

We quote her own quaint description of the meeting:—

"When we entered the house, they were standing at the door within, each of them dressed as usual; for they were dressed as they were when they first came, and would never put on any religious dress, hoping for ours. What they wore, however, was most modest, and showed plainly how little thought they had taken for themselves. They were so poorly clad, and almost all of them so thin, as to show that they had been living a most penitential life. Most of their time had been spent in saying the Divine Office, which was not an easy task, as only one of the little number could read well, and they said very little which was correct."

While in Villanueva, Theresa met with an accident, which detained her there longer than she had expected. One of the greatest inconveniences of the house was the depth of the well from which they had to draw water. Theresa, in order to make the task easier, had a wheel put up, with ropes and pulleys; but a workman having neglected to fasten the rope, the wheel fell violently on her arm and broke it. This accident, the second which had happened to Theresa in one year, caused her much suffering, and kept her away from her work for several months. It seemed to be the beginning of the end; for from Villanueva, Theresa went to Toledo, and there was immediately prostrated by a paralytic stroke, which at her advanced age — she was now over sixty — made her condition very critical.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

THERESA'S illness at Toledo left her in a wretchedly weak state of nerves and body. She partially recovered the use of her limbs, but for weeks was confined to her room, and obliged to carry on her work wholly by means of her pen. She had accomplished an immense amount of active work since she had passed her sixtieth birthday; for she had been travelling incessantly in uncomfortable conveyances in all sorts of weather for years. From one city to another, between Medina and Valladolid, Toledo and Salamanca, Seville and Segovia, she had made pilgrimages, overcoming with her own strength of will obstacles of all kinds; poverty and illness being the smallest hindrances to her work. She had indeed put into practice her own famous motto, "Ou souffrir ou mourir!"

All through her illness her interest in the reform continued, and she wrote advising the fathers and the sisters about the smallest details. In a letter to Father Gratian we find her warning him not to make an occasion for "tattling" by "eating in the convents;" and the prioresses are told over and over again to avoid any and every occasion for scandal. Early in June, Theresa was able to make the journey to Segovia, but it was a journey fraught with pain and discomfort. Father Jerome Gratian accompanied her, and was with her when she heard the sad news of her brother Lorenzo's death. There was much to be done in arranging Lorenzo's business affairs during the next months. His daughter, little Teresita, was left entirely to her aunt's care, and at first Theresa hoped to make her nephew Francis a Reformed friar. The young man, however, objected to being disposed of by his aunt, and preferred to marry a pretty and well-born Castilian girl. This marriage Theresa disapproved, and for a long time the affairs of her nephew and the necessary division of the property occupied her entire time.

A letter to the prioress at Alba de Tormes, written at this period, insists on the strict adherence of the nuns to the rule of being veiled when they talk to externs. Confessors, Theresa thinks, had best see the sisters veiled; and all the novices were to be made to appear alike, so as to avoid the possibility of confessional flirtations. A remarkable letter, written while Theresa was ill, is addressed to a nun of another order, who desired to enter one of the Reformed convents. This was against the rules of the new order, as Theresa wrote to her; but she added that she herself lived twenty-five years in a convent with eighty or one hundred nuns, and ends her letter with this tender word of encouragement, "Señora mia, after all, we are able to love this great God anywhere."

A quaint note of thanks written to the Prioress Anne, of the Incarnation, shows us the kind of presents which passed between the pious sisters. "May His Majesty repay her for the limes she has sent her, and the veil too, for the one she had was too high," is a proof that material benefits were not always unwelcome. Another

quite severe letter we find addressed to the nuns of St. Joseph's at Avila. Since Theresa had left them they had fallen from grace, begun to grumble at the hardships of their life, and to ask for more indulgences. Mother Theresa was horrified at the request that they all might eat meat. Another petition made by them was, that those nuns who were in feeble health might keep something in their cells to eat whenever they were hungry. We see by these requests that the flesh did rebel occasionally against the harsh treatment imposed by Theresa. "Your Reverence," writes Theresa to Gratian, "the things demanded by the religious of Avila are such that if they were granted there would be little difference between them and the nuns of the Incarnation. I am amazed to see what the Devil has done already;" and she adds with characteristic inconsistency, "It is the confessor who is almost wholly at fault."

Theresa's letters fill four large volumes, and are extremely interesting reading. They are addressed to archbishops and bishops, to able statesmen like Diego de Mendoza, and to

women in every rank of life. Many of them are purely spiritual, devoted entirely to the things of the soul; but they have a grace and charm of style which makes Ticknor claim for them "a distinguished place in the epistolary literature of Spain." Besides her letters, Theresa wrote her autobiography, the "Book of Foundations," and two books, entitled "The Way of Perfection" and "The Interior Castle." This last work was written in Toledo, in 1577. It is full of fancies, and obscure in many parts; but it contains occasional beautiful and poetical passages, which are like the writings of the so-called Transcendental philosophers. She also wrote the "Manner of Visiting Monasteries of Nuns," and her celebrated "Constitution." Besides these works, she was the author of seventeen short "Exclamations of the Soul to God," to use after Communion. The philosopher Leibnitz is said to have admired her writings, and there is much in them which appeals to the student of poetry and metaphysics. Her acute study of her own mental condition, and her division of the interior life of the soul

into four mansions, is certainly a marvellous, if bewildering, piece of self-analysis. Besides these prose works, Theresa wrote several beautiful religious poems. The only one which is widely known has for its refrain, "Que muero porque no muero."

One interesting letter written by Theresa in the last year of her life reveals to us the inward peace which came to her through her outward activity. In her youth she had yearned unceasingly to find rest for her soul, and to be assured that she was leading her life in harmony with the Divine Will. But this consciousness came to her only in the latter part of her career. Then her days were filled with positive work and necessary duties, leaving her no time to doubt and question, and requiring for performance all her strength.

"Would that I could convey to your lordship," she writes to her confessor, "the quiet and consolation which fill my soul! It has such a certainty that it is to possess God. The imaginary visions have ceased, and this interior peace which continues, neither pleasures nor

pains are able to disturb. I only want to be satisfied that I am going on rightly, and if I can do anything for God."

After hearing of the backsliding at St. Joseph's Convent, Theresa determined to go thither at once. Old and infirm as she was, she accepted the position of prioress, and soon succeeded in setting both the temporal and the spiritual matters right. This, the last visit Theresa made in Avila, the home of her childhood, was a very sad one. Her old friends and kindred had all passed away, yet everything suggested the memory of her younger days. The loneliness of the place depressed Theresa more than ever before, and it took a great deal of moral courage to enable her to do her duty and carry on her work. In January, 1582, she left Avila, and, accompanied by Father Gratian and three sisters, bade farewell to St. Joseph's, and started for Burgos. The weather was very bad, and Theresa suffered from a severe inflammation of the throat. As they proceeded on their journey the roads grew worse and worse on account of floods, and Father Gratian had

sometimes to alight and drag the carriage through the mud. The river Alançon had swollen, and at a place called "The Bridges" had entirely hidden the track. At one place all were discouraged; but Theresa, despite her years, stepped from her carriage, told the rest of the party to follow her, and marched ahead through mud and water, assured by faith that "all would be well."

After this and other terrible experiences the party at length reached Burgos. There were some difficulties in the way of starting the new foundation there; but at last a suitable house was found, and all entered the new convent. The city of Burgos was built on the river Alançon, and the house that was taken for the Reformed convent was built outside the city, on the bank of the river. At times the waters raged with such violence that the house, which was very old, shook as if it were about to fall. Once the river swelled to such a degree that the waters reached the first floor, and the devout sisters were obliged to carry the Sacrament on to the roof of the house. This was the habita-

tation and these were some of the perils which Theresa, old and feeble, partly paralyzed, and visibly failing in strength, had to endure. Nor can these physical discomforts have been as hard for her as the mental trials which came later.

Theresa, accompanied by Anna, a lay sister and the constant companion of her last journeys, and Teresita, who was soon to make her profession, started from Burgos in August, 1582. They went to Valladolid, where disputes had arisen concerning Lorenzo's will. Theresa intended to stay in Valladolid at the convent which she herself had founded; but the prioress had been prejudiced against her by enemies, and expressed a wish that she should not remain there even one day. This same prioress went so far as to take Theresa to the gate and say to her, "Go, and return hither no more." These harsh words cut Mother Theresa to the heart, for they were uttered by one of her own daughters, to whom she had always gladly given love and sympathy.

The little party next stopped at Medina del

Campo; and here again they were greeted with none of the old enthusiasm. Theresa admonished the prioress for some trifle, and she took the reproof very ill and showed evidence of insubordination; she even answered the saint, who for so long had been accustomed to reverence and obedience, with great insolence. "This grieved our mother so sorely," writes Anna, "that she ate nothing, and remained awake all night."

It was these bitter disappointments, and the apparent failure of her work towards the last of her life, which proved to be more than Theresa could bear. From this time forward her strength began to fail, and all knew that the end was near.

The painful visits in Valladolid and Medina discouraged Theresa so much that she felt anxious to return to Avila at once; but the Duchess of Alva sent for her to come to her. "Thither, therefore, she was carried in a litter, suffering great pains all the way." They arrived at Medina on the 15th of September, but their receptian was so cold that they left the place without

taking food, meaning to eat on the way. But the villages through which they passed were so poor that they could buy nothing but a few dry figs. Theresa was in a burning fever, and faint from want of food. "What have you, my daughter? I pray you give me something, for I am exhausted," she said. Her devoted nurse gave four reals to a peasant, asking her to buy two eggs; but the money was brought back to her, for no eggs could be found. The next day, in going to another town, they fared a little better; but their dinner consisting of boiled herbs and onions was not nourishment fit for an invalid's diet. That same night, on the Vigil of Saint Matthew, Theresa was brought to Alva; her sufferings were almost over, her work on earth was nearly done; she now only waited for the "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END.

AMONG the great Mystics of the world Theresa, perhaps, does not take the highest place; her Mysticism is distinctly theurgic in character, and in some of her visionary extravagances she lays herself open to the accusation of being called hysterical, if not insane. But among the famous women of the world she surely has a right to stand. Neither the blasphemous pen of Voltaire nor the keen, critical eye of Renan has been able to condemn the life of this saint, even if contempt is expressed for her reputed miracles. Years of unselfish devotion proved the entire sincerity of her love for God. "I could love thee, O God," she wrote, "all the same if there were no heaven, and if there were no hell I would fear thee no less;" her religious fervor was intense, and free from any taint of self-seeking.

Of all the saints in the Roman calendar, Saint Theresa has the most admirers among modern writers. A century after her death the writings of this Spanish woman converted the poet Richard Crashaw to the Roman faith; and the romantic story of her life has drawn from George Eliot the exquisite prelude to Middlemarch. In that remarkable philosophical novel written by Mr. Shorthouse, we find the Jesuit Father Clare putting "The Flaming Heart, or the Life of Saint Theresa," into the hands of his metaphysical pupil when the dreamy boy was first becoming conscious of his own soul.

In these modern days we are apt to think of a saint as a creature removed from the common experiences of life. When we speak the word, we have a vision of a woman clad in sombre raiment, who with streaming eyes and emaciated countenance spends her days and nights in kneeling before a crucifix, repeating *Aves*. From such a life certainly no one in this busy century could derive much help. But what has this portrait to do with our energetic heroine, who with sublime faith said, "Theresa

and four ducats can do nothing; but God, Theresa, and four ducats can do anything"?

In Theresa's character we find combined the elements which went to make up both the practical Martha and the loving Mary of the Gospel story; for she had what the French would call "deux génies, quand il n'en fait qu'un seul à un homme pour être immortel." An amusing story is told which admirably illustrates these two sides of her nature. One morning she is said to have been busy in the kitchen, frying fish for the convent dinner. Suddenly she was overcome by what she calls an ecstasy, — what we might call a mighty tide of religious feeling; she describes this feeling as being so powerful that it made her body tremble from head to foot. The crisis passed, — it only lasted a moment, — and Theresa turned to look after her practical occupation. She found, to her amazement, that she had not once let go the handle of her frying-pan, and had been wise enough to save her fish. It was thus throughout all Theresa's experiences; she was wonderfully successful in looking after the "near ends" of

religion, no matter how far away her spirit might soar.

In studying this sixteenth-century woman, we find love to have been the great source of her power over her contemporaries; she had a perfect genius for loving all who came in contact with her; and there were few who could resist the natural outpouring of her impulsive, affectionate nature. In her own passionate yearning to be loved, we see Theresa touch hands with George Eliot, Margaret Fuller, and all the great-hearted women of the world; for neither saints nor sages have lived without human sympathy. In her final self-conquest and the unselfish devotion of her life to all whom she could help and comfort we recognize the Infinite Love upholding her nature and flooding it with rich spiritual force.

All through Theresa's life, Faith, Hope, and Charity were her watchwords; it was the courage which came from her faith that led her to overcome what seemed to others insurmountable obstacles, and, already old and worn by disease, to found seventeen convents for women

and fifteen for men, in an age when the position of women was little better than that of slaves. The faith which gave her this strength was the same faith that led Moses out of and Gordon into the land of Egypt, and which now and always subdues kingdoms, obtains promises, and stops the mouths of lions. Faith in the end for which she worked, and a mighty Hope that God was with her, helping her to accomplish her end, — these, with Charity, were the guiding stars of Theresa's earthly pilgrimage.

It is easy to smile with superior wisdom today, as we see how little that is tangible this great Spanish woman really accomplished. There is a possibility that her local reformation really turned backwards the wave of the great Protestant reformation which was spreading over Europe, and that thus according to our finite views she even stemmed the tide of progress for a brief time. Our taste is often shocked at her alleged familiar interviews with God and Christ, and we are amazed at her ignorance of science and blind credulity in miracles which could not for a moment stand before the criticism of the

modern scientific mind. But when we have granted all these things, and subtracted from her memoirs every deed for which the Roman Church has canonized her, we still have a grand and a famous woman left. Who can explain the mighty power of this woman's personality? Is it not this power which is the real mystery in the lives of the saints and sages of all the ages?

"What was strong and beautiful and true and earnest in Theresa was in herself; what was morbid and mistaken was the result of the influences around her," writes Mrs. Jameson; and the beauty, strength, and earnestness in her life is what we, in this slight sketch, have tried to bring out. For it is not as a saint in the superstitious meaning of that word that Theresa is worthy of being remembered; it is her rich womanly nature, her immense capacity for sympathy, and her power of merging her own personality in the Infinite, which have made her deserving of three centuries of earthly immortality. These qualities take her out of the Roman calendar to place her in the grander calendar of universal history, and make her a leader in

that great army of Christians who are all united by having lived in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

It was in September, 1582, that Theresa entered Alba de Tormes. There she remained ill for two weeks, and there she finally died. As she gradually realized that her strength was failing, her one prayer was, "Lord, either to die or to suffer: I ask for myself nothing else." Once she was heard whispering, "It comforts me to hear the clock strike, for so, methinks, I draw a little nearer to the seeing of God, since one hour more of my life is passed;" her last words were, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." She was buried in the Carmelite Convent, behind the walls and the grate, under a large stone; but it was not for several years that her body found a final resting-place. Then relic-hunters and religious fanatics had so mutilated her "earthly tabernacle" that it must have looked a good deal like an ancient *torso* before it was finally permitted to lie in peace.

Many grotesque legends cluster around Theresa's last days, and even follow her body to the

tomb. We will not give them here; for they mar the sacred simplicity of her death. A poetical fancy concerning "Butterflies" (in the Spanish, *Maripose*), — a pet name by which Theresa designated her own sisters, — endured still longer. It was related by one of the witnesses for her canonization, and now reads that many years after her burial, several sisters in Seville were speaking about her wonderful life, when suddenly a mantle which Theresa had worn became filled with white butterflies. Another witness said that before the transferral of her body from Alba de Tormes to Avila in 1585, a white butterfly was seen to come out of her grave.

Between ten and eleven o'clock on every evening all the Reformed Carmelites — and there are still convents founded by them scattered throughout the entire Christian world — lift up their hearts in prayer. They do not pray for themselves; they have a maxim that a Carmelite who is only occupied with saving his own soul is unworthy of his vocation; but their devout and daily evening prayers are offered for

the spiritual welfare of all God's children, scattered over the great wide world. When their evening petition has been offered, the poor lonely brothers and sisters retire to their barren cells, content to wait patiently for the coming of God's kingdom on earth. In their aspiration after a state of ideal perfection they find their sole source of human joy. This beautiful custom, which has lasted for centuries, began in Saint Theresa's day; it was one of the many new regulations laid down for her children by this fervent, faithful woman whose early life was such a long succession of failures, but who eventually won that greatest of all victories, — the victory over herself.

"Souls are not Spaniards too; one friendly flood
Of baptism blends them all into one blood.
Christ's faith makes but one body of all souls,
And love 's that body's soul no law controls.
What soul soe'er in any language can
Speak Heaven like hers is my soul's countryman."[1]

[1] From "A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa." 1646. By Richard Crashaw.

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